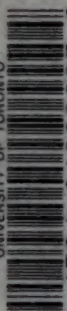


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# SIR THOMAS MORE AND HIS UTOPIA

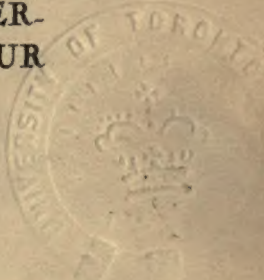
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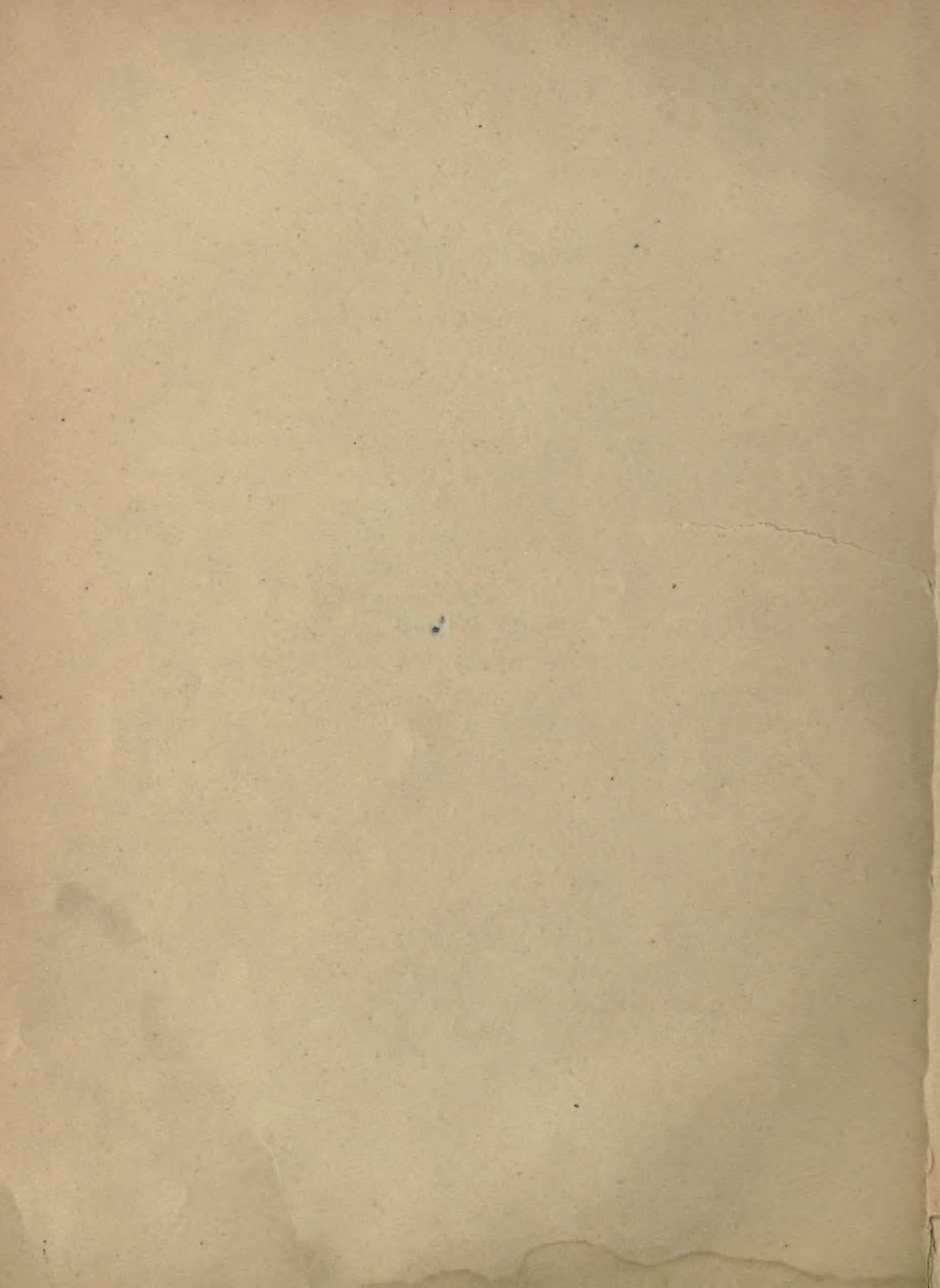
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TO  
MY WIVES





## PREFACE.

Shortly after I had begun my studies on Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, my eyes fell upon the *Rede zur Jahresfeier der Universität am 28 Februar 1921 gehalten vom Rector Professor Dr. Rudolf Helm*, in which reference was made to the deplorable economical condition of Germany. Speaking of the general distress, the professor was involuntarily reminded of model States with ideal people and perfect laws and passed in review the *Critias*, with the unfinished picture of fairy land Atlantis, and the *Republic*, in some respects the proto-type of More's *Utopia*. When reading Professor Helm's remarks about the general discontent and the "Unzufriedenheit mit dem eigenen Lose," I could not help thinking of the memorable words spoken by Raphael Hythloday in More's romance, words which so fitly apply to the present situation, "that no man ought to be counted an enemy, whyche hath done no injury, and that the felowshyppe of nature is a stronge league; and that men be better and more surely knitte together by love and benevolence, then by convenauntes of leagues; by hartie affection of minde then by woordes." <sup>1)</sup> The solidarity of the races and the brotherhood of men were — as they are now — fine phrases! Nor is it in this connection only that the *Utopia* reflects the sad conditions of our times. Did not More in his work give an enumeration of evils and abuses which in many respects bear a close analogy to those that beset contemporary society? Did not he unroll a very sad picture of the international position of the nations of Europe? Did not he raise his voice in bitter complaint against the insecurity of public affairs, and the increase of crime against life and property? Did

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1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*. (Bk. II. Ch. VII. p. 109).

not he describe the general impoverization as the result of the warlike propensities of the ruling classes ? It would be idle to pretend that we, moderns, have no just cause for complaint ! The times are still hopelessly out of joint and the difficulties that confront the world are tremendous. A huge burden of debt rests upon the shoulders of the European countries that were engaged in the great war. Trade is depressed on account of the poverty of the nations, and the menace of Revolution hovers like a dark shadow over the continent of Europe. Many of the shrewdest brains in the world are now working to restore something like the semblance of the old prosperity to this stricken continent. About four hundred years ago Thomas More undertook the same task, and detected with the quick insight of genius the evils and abuses that corrupted society. With a fine sagacity he indicated the remedies which could cure them and directed his efforts towards the amelioration of the dreadful conditions then prevailing. Could not modern social reformers profit by the lessons conveyed by More's masterpiece ? Why should they dismiss his work with a smile, because it describes an imaginary, that is a non-existent State ? Have the repudiators of "Utopianism" any conception of the number of Utopian ideals (political, social and religious) which have been carried into actual fulfilment ? In this treatise it will be my special endeavour to show what More was to his century and to his country, how much social and political activity, how much educational energy he devoted to the pressing needs of the times.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to those who have assisted me in my task. Foremost amongst these is Professor A. E. H. SWAEN of the Amsterdam University, in whom I have found a ready, I need not say, a most able and skilful adviser in all matters of difficulty. His suggestions, ever offered in a friendly spirit, have been of invaluable service to me in the preparation of this work. My friend, Professor A. W. DE



## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

Es reden und träumen die Menschen viel  
Von besseren künftigen Tagen  
Nach einem glücklichen, goldenen Ziel  
Sieht man sie rennen und jagen.  
Die Welt wird alt und wird wieder jung  
Doch der Mensch hofft immer Verbesserung.

We all know that the term "Utopia" was invented by Sir Thomas More, that it was applied to an imaginary isle (the Gr. οὐτόπος = no place) which he represents as enjoying the greatest perfection in politics and laws, whose inhabitants lived under the most perfect conditions possible. That the term as such was first used by the great Englishman on no account means that the idea of an ideal commonwealth was first suggested by him — far from it. In this connection we may appropriately quote the above lines of Schiller's *Hoffnung*.

Indeed, as long as the world has existed, there has been a craving for better conditions, for happiness and peace. From times immemorial there have been people who, dissatisfied with the political and economical conditions under which they lived, suggested improvements in their descriptions of ideal and imaginary countries, where the inhabitants live in a kind of earthly paradise. The number of these literary products is enormous, for the imagination of people is wonderful, the human mind ingenious and inventive. Political economists have often enough tried to put some sort of system in this chaos of human fantasy, some making a division into political and economical works, according as the political or the economical

element predominates. Others again lay particular stress on the communistic element, basing their classification on the *nature* of this communism, the result being a division into novels with "halber" and "ganzer Kommunismus" as the Germans call it <sup>1</sup>).

From a literary standpoint, however, a systematic division or grouping has not yet sufficiently been attempted. Therefore this question demands our full attention.

From a constructive point of view I would first of all divide the Utopian novels into two large groups: the one group in which the reader is all at once placed in an ideal State, and no endeavours whatsoever are made to describe the transition from imperfection to perfection; and the second in which the writer builds up his State slowly and systematically till it has ultimately reached a stage of perfection. The first group is the greater by far; no wonder, for the task of the writers of this class is least difficult and their method simplifies matters considerably; as it is, we are suddenly placed in an earthly paradise inhabited by people for whom life is a bliss, but how and under what circumstances they ever got into this privileged and enviable condition remains a mystery to the reader, for the obvious reason that it is a mystery to the writer himself. To this group of authors the voyages of discovery in the Renaissance-period afforded ample and excellent material to work upon: sailors visited unknown parts of the world, told the weirdest and most fantastic stories about these regions, their accounts, however incredible, being eagerly listened to at home. What is unknown excites people's interest, and the wonderful narratives about distant parts naturally stimulates the fantasy and the imagination; that, therefore, descriptions about imaginary ideal countries were particularly popular in this period is not surprising, the voyages of discovery supplying abundant and important subject-matter. It was left to the writer to make

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1) See Dr. Friedrich Kleinwächter: *Die Staatsromane* (Wien 1891).

a proper use of the information supplied, a dry enumeration of facts would not do; he could only then be sure of success, if ready wit and resourcefulness were coupled with a vivid power of imagination. Of the romances that were more or less influenced by the adventurous tales of bold and daring navigators Thomas More's Utopia is no doubt the best known. Others, such as Bacon's *New Atlantis* and Campanella's *Civitas Solis* were soon to follow. Altogether this construction became extremely popular, and in course of time the number of novels with the customary shipwreck and the subsequent landing in an unknown land grew to an alarming extent. From which we should not draw the wrong inference that all literary products of this kind fall under the heading Utopian novels. Far from it. Many of them only purpose to describe the adventures of a hero in unknown parts of the world more or less in anticipation and imitation of Daniel de Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*. These works, which in literature are designated by the suggestive term of Robinsonades, fall outside the scope of the subject under discussion. It is obvious, however, that the writer of a Robinsonade will often be tempted to describe the manners and customs of the people the hero comes into contact with, the circumstances under which they live, their form of government, in short that the author will avail himself of the opportunity to describe a commonwealth different from ours, and better of course, which he wants to set as an example for his own countrymen. This group of Robinsonades differs from the first, which I would call the Robinsonade-proper, in so much that they contain a Utopian element, and as such they cannot altogether be ignored. Theoretically this distinction seems easy enough, but practically it is very difficult indeed to draw the line between the Robinsonade-proper and the pseudo-Robinsonade, and again between the pseudo-Robinsonade and the Utopian-novel, each group partaking somewhat of the characteristics of the other. Besides much will also depend on personal insight. Result: different



definitions and divisions. Dr. Hermann Ullrich, whose bibliography of *Robinson und Robinsonaden* <sup>1)</sup> gives evidence of a more than superficial study of the subject, declares in his preface that one of his greatest difficulties was to make out whether a novel was a Robinsonade or not, "denn sehr viele Bücher, die mit jenem Namen prunkten, haben — wie z. B. zahlreiche Werke gerade aus den ersten Jahrzehnten nach der Veröffentlichung des Defoe'schen Robinson — mit dem Robinson-motiv nichts zu thun, sondern bedienen sich jenes Namens nur als eines Aushängeschildes, in der ausgesprochenen Absicht, dem Buche mehr Leser zuzuführen." <sup>2)</sup> For Ullrich the criterion of the Robinsonades is "insularische Abgeschlossenheit von der menschlichen Gesellschaft" <sup>3)</sup>; all the others he designates by the name of "pseudo-Robinsonaden".

Now I think that for practical purposes it would be most advisable to lay special stress on the *subject-matter*.

For a proper and systematic classification of the different literary prose fictions we shall have to settle this question: what is the writer's ruling idea? What is the quintessence of his work? Is the work primarily intended as a description of an ideal commonwealth or is the element of adventure its essential and predominating feature? On these considerations our division will chiefly depend. Thus, it becomes clear that weird and fantastical tales in which the writer sends his hero to the sun or to the moon (Cyrano de Bergerac's *Journey to the Moon*), or down into the bowels of the earth (Ludwig Holberg's *Niels Klim's subterranean Journey*), or pays with him most extraordinary visits to flying and swimming islands (Morelly's *Naufrage des isles flottantes ou Basiliade du célèbre Pilpai*), all of which are evidently meant as a parody on exaggerated

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1) *Robinson und Robinsonaden, Bibliographie, Geschichte, Kritik*, Weimar, 1898. von Dr. Hermann Ullrich.

2) *Ibid.* p. X.

3) *Ibid.* p. XIV.

accounts of bragging adventurers, must be looked upon as an extension of the Robinsonade and as such cannot come in for a share of our special attention. Only those narratives in which the author's leading idea is a description of an ideal community with perfect laws and regulations can be regarded as Utopian novels.

Having thus made certain necessary divisions, we may now inquire what methods the different Utopian writers have adopted to bring their hero into contact with the fictitious people whose manners and customs they intend to describe in the course of their work. For, though they generally agree in this respect that they make the principal character of their romance the mouthpiece of their own thoughts, the circumstances under which the hero becomes acquainted with the imaginary country, are altogether different.

I have already spoken of the group of authors who, as far as the framework of their novel is concerned, are indebted to the marvellous accounts of daring seafarers and enterprising explorers. Other Utopists apply a quite different method to introduce their hero into an ideal commonwealth. They cause him to fall into a profound sleep, from which he awakes to find everything entirely changed, marvelling how, when, and by whom all this has been brought about. We are then told about the moral depression of the hero, about his own inferiority in the presence of people who are so much better than himself, about his despair at being misunderstood by everybody, his reconciliation to his fate when the generous inhabitants intimate to him their desire to raise him to their level, thus making him a participant in their happiness. From this moment the hero becomes their most devoted pupil and their most ardent propagandist. This is generally speaking the conception of this group of works, of which Bellamy's *Looking Backward* is no doubt one of the most popular representatives.

Quite a unique group is formed by those writers who have the singular idea of describing a State such as it ought *not* to be — their

works are satirical throughout — we have only to make their positive statements negative, their negative positive to get some idea of what they understand by a perfect community. Let us call this group of writers who aim more at would-be originality than depth of thought the “reversialists” and mention Butler’s *Erewhon* (reading backward: Nowhere) as the most typical representative of its class.

So much for the large group of Utopian writers that have studiously avoided to give a systematic development of their ideal State and whom we have sub-divided into three classes, according as the travelling — the dream — or the “world-upside down” — motive prevails.

We shall now discuss the writers that have undertaken to give a more or less extensive and detailed account of the development of their model State. Their task is a most difficult and comprehensive one; consequently this group is the smallest. Plato’s *Republic* stands out far above all others as an inimitable example of this class. His work is not perfect in every respect — some of his doctrines are open to serious criticism — but his thoughts, his ideas are so extraordinary that there is hardly any Utopian writer that has not been influenced by this classical standard work, and yet, though they have all profited by the maxims contained in it, though they have all more or less borrowed from their great predecessor, in one respect practically all of them differ from the classical philosopher. Plato may have had many imitators, but these have seldom, if ever, attempted to build up a State from its very foundation as their great master did before them. As I intend to devote a special chapter to Plato — his work forms in more than one respect the ground-plan for many subsequent writings of the kind and therefore deserves more than passing notice — I shall abstain in this introductory chapter from discussing the *Republic* and the obligation under which it has laid posterity. Ages and ages were



to pass before we shall meet with writers, who in their description of perfect commonwealths suggest transitional measures from imperfection to perfection. It is not until the early part of the 19th century that the French communist Etienne Cabet, an enthusiastic but highly naive reformer, pays some attention to the very intricate problem of how a State might be changed into a perfect community, but he does not nearly do the work so thoroughly as Plato, devoting only part of his fiction to the transitional period. I do not intend to draw here a parallel between the philosopher Plato and the communist Cabet. That I mention the writer of the *Voyage en Icarie* at all, is owing to the fact that he of all modern Utopists tries to make his theories acceptable by suggesting gradual changes from imperfection to perfection. Being convinced of the success of communism, if judiciously developed, he proposes several stages from "inégalité décroissante" to "égalité progressive". For this reason he belongs to the last group.


These are the main divisions. How the representatives of the different groups have acquitted themselves of their task, in how far they have succeeded in their attempt to give a picture of an ideal commonwealth, is a matter of later consideration. Here we may make this general remark that in forming a correct and fair estimate of these literary products, and I want to stress this point most emphatically, we should bear in mind that the task of a Utopian writer is an extremely difficult one. He is no ordinary novelist who can pay all his attention to the delineation of his characters and to the development of a well-sustained plot. He cannot devote himself to the literary part only, because he has a twofold task to accomplish. To him the difficult part is assigned of teaching the reader a lesson in political economy in an attractive form. He cannot discuss his subject scientifically in the manner of a political economist, for then his work would be read by a very limited number of people only. If he wants his

ideas to be widely spread, a primary requirement is that his work should be popular, in other words, he has to couch his ideas in such an attractive form that the average reader takes the "learned" part into the bargain and accepts it with a smile. All this means a great demand upon the inventiveness and ingenuity of the writer. How is he to make his novel both instructive and attractive? In many cases a love-affair is a welcome device suiting the purpose wonderfully well, for it seldom fails to captivate the average reader. The hero, therefore, not only appears in his quality of a tiresome interlocutor putting an interminable number of questions on all sorts of social and economical problems — and this is the bitter pill for the reader to swallow — but he is also the youthful and ardent lover, who, in spite of novelties and changes that engross his attention, is still keenly susceptible to the charms of the fair sex. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* affords a rather humorous example of this method. If one chapter is devoted to the discussion of social reforms (in a conversation between the hero, Mr. West and his kind host, Dr. Leete), the scene is sure to be shifted in the next, when we are introduced to the daughter of Dr. Leete, the charming Edith, with whom our hero falls hopelessly in love. Bellamy has no doubt the gift of pleasing everybody: when the dose of social and communistic principles administered threatens to become too powerful, he will stop and cheer up his tired reader in the bright company of the young and happy lovers.

However, the difficulties of a Utopian writer are not only confined to a preservation of the desired equilibrium between the scientific-economical and the fantastic-romantic. As a propagator of his theories on social, political, and economical reforms the author ought to have an extensive knowledge of a wide range of subjects. Things cannot be done by halves, and this truth applies especially to the men whose earnest endeavours are directed towards improving the sad conditions of their fellowmen. The writer who is



quite serious about his task, who feels that he has a certain mission to fulfil, will in the course of his work touch on all questions related to public welfare, and the number of problems that present themselves is far greater than the casual reader will imagine. The State is a big machine consisting of many and intricate parts, each of them having a special function of its own. No part can be neglected or dispensed with; if it should be neglected, there would be a hitch somewhere, and the machine would be sure to go wrong. The conscientious reformer has, therefore, to look at the problem from all sides: he must be a farmer as well as an architect, a sanitary inspector as well as a pedagogue, a theologian as well as a philosopher. Of course he cannot be expected to be all in one; it is beyond the power of the human mind to grasp and comprehend such a wide range of subjects; but if the author underrates his task — and many Utopian writers do — he will make palpable mistakes, and his endeavours to convince his fellowmen of the feasibility of his theories must be looked upon as a failure. The writer that is fully aware of the tremendous task he has voluntarily laid upon his shoulders has not chosen the easiest way to success, but, provided he sets himself to his task seriously, he of all others can lay claim to the gratitude of his fellowmen, for, in spite of errors and mistakes, many of his suggestions may be of great practical value for a satisfactory solution of all kinds of social, economical, and political problems. Thomas More is a worthy representative of this type of Utopists, and it is a deplorable fact that other writers of the same class have not followed his example. Had they done so, their work might perhaps have had great influence on society at large. Who knows but the present state of anarchy, of discord and strife would never have been! But only few writers possess the extensive knowledge, the sound judgment and keen insight, which, combined with great inventiveness and fantasy form the indispensable qualities of a successful



Utopian novelist. These qualities they lack, and being unequal to their task, they show their inability by describing absurd and impossible situations. In their work we are looking in vain for the verisimilitude with which the serious author tries to convince his reader and as the idea of reality, of probability is sorely wanting, they sooner harm than promote Utopian ideas, and if their romances are eagerly read, it is on account of the constant variation of scene, the extraordinary adventures and vicissitudes of the hero, but not on account of any valuable suggestions for the improvement of social conditions.

In one respect the writers of this class almost unanimously agree : they all show a delightful optimism as regards the feasibility of their ideas. They are not only absolutely and thoroughly convinced that their plans can be carried out successfully, but also agree as to the means that ought to be employed. The basis for all true happiness lies in communism, equal division of property. Communism is sure to bring salvation, for it destroys ignoble qualities in man : when there is an equal division of property, there will be neither dire poverty nor excessive wealth, and when no individual is placed in a privileged position — for are not we all equal ? — there can be no cause for envy or jealousy. That is the keynote of their work ; that is what the great Utopian writers insist on : no private property, which is the root of all evil, which fosters selfishness and greed, and which disregards public welfare. When private interest has free play, disorder will ensue, and the maintenance of social order is neglected. All this they demonstrate with indefatigable zeal. (But what about the practical results of their endeavours) ? The answer to this question is given by the communists of our days, who are the first to appeal to such works as More's *Utopia*, but who apply the maxims it contains in a manner that would have horrified its author. The optimism of some people is indestructible. I am thinking of Cabet,



who wrote his *Voyage en Icarie* with tremendous success, if enthusiasm is to be regarded as such. Soon there were thousands and thousands of people calling themselves "Icarians" after the inhabitants of Cabet's imaginary country. When, however, the ardent reformer made an appeal to his enthusiastic partisans to follow him and to found a State in North America (which part of the world became a sort of laboratory for Utopian experiments) on the communistic principles advocated in his work, his friends fell off one by one, their number dwindling down to sixty-nine. Of this small band Cabet became the leader, but his attempts resulted in a deplorable failure. For, in spite of his indomitable energy and his undeniable talents as a leader, he could not give the members of his small community that happiness, that contentment, which, on the strength of his theories, they had anticipated. Far from being satisfied, some of his men intrigued against him, and Cabet was ultimately banished in 1856. He was sent to Paris, where he was tried, and after a brilliant defence honourably acquitted. Deeply shocked at human ingratitude he died soon after. Cabet was a hard and energetic worker, who sacrificed his life for the happiness of his fellowmen. Whatever his shortcomings may have been, and he made palpable mistakes, his endeavours were sincere. There is something tragical in the death of this man.

With very few exceptions the Utopian novels have been written in dialogues, which style suits the purpose best. It is the writer who has to propagate his theories, who knows that he is placed over against a reader who very likely does not share his ideas at all. To convince the reader of the practicability of his theories, to overcome his prejudices and to cure him of his erroneous notions, the author introduces an inquisitive interlocutor who in the novel personates the public in general, and now the ensuing process is followed. The camp is divided into two parts; on the one hand

there is the advocate of the system, on the other its opponent; the former making sweeping assertions, the latter trying to refute them. That the battle ends in a total defeat of the adversary and a brilliant victory of the Utopist is a foregone conclusion. But then the interlocutor is not a very serious adversary. On the whole his remarks are rather shallow and do not give evidence of much ready wit, nor are his repartees to the point, altogether he cuts a rather poor figure. In this connection it is worth while to follow the series of dialogues between Socrates and Glaucus in Plato's *Republic*, devoting our attention to the replies of the interlocutor. How meaningless, how utterly insignificant are his remarks! Now and then he will ask an explanation of a problem suggested by his friend, but in most cases exclamations such as, "Yes, that must be so", "nothing is simpler", "I believe you must be right here", "I grant the truth of your inference", "I entirely agree with you" are the usual comments, and if he ventures at all to contradict his friend, it appears that he has not been able to follow him, and that his objections are simply owing to an entire misunderstanding. With due deference to this and later works I cannot help saying that the interrogator in the Utopian novels shows a very striking resemblance to Dr. Watson in Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*: the doctor making all kinds of silly remarks, the great detective sweeping away all difficulties as if by magic. Is not the same part assigned to the interlocutors in the Utopian novels? And again: is there no similarity between the Utopist and the detective in making us believe that the most intricate problem is simplicity itself? To read *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* one would imagine that nothing is simpler than bringing to light the darkest crime, to read the Utopian novel one would be forced into the belief that nothing in the world is simpler than the foundation of an ideal commonwealth. And yet — and here is another point of contact — practice proves that in either

case the writer is wrong. Never has the number of mysterious and unpunished crimes been greater than nowadays. Never have people that advocate equality and fraternization shown less forbearance than in our times and never have we been further from the realization of their ideals.

The interlocutor not only serves as a kind of foil to bring out all the more clearly the superiority of the Utopist: he is also the connecting link between the different topics to be discussed. This is a matter of no small importance, for it lies more or less in the nature of things that a Utopian novel tends to become a series of disconnected events. His presence throughout the novel imparts to it a kind of unity.

A There are few literary products in which the subjective element comes so much to the fore as in these fictions. Every writer gives his own personal views on what he calls an ideal State. There are those — to make two main divisions — that depict a commonwealth with a king at its head. The works of these Utopists serve a twofold purpose, for, by the side of describing a perfect community, they set themselves as a special task to teach kings how to make their rule a blessing to their subjects. The monarch they think worthy of being placed at the head of the State must not be a tyrant whose policy is directed towards enriching himself at the expense of his people. He must not plunge his subjects in a disastrous war only and exclusively with a view to enlarge his kingdom, but he ought to be a man of high moral principles, ever intent on promoting the welfare and happiness of his subjects. Others again consider a king incompatible with their communistic principles, and give a form of government in which each individual has equal rights and has no prince put over him. The preference for some particular form of government is more or less swayed by the political conditions of the times when the Utopian novels were written. In his *Utopia* Thomas More gave a



picture of a perfect prince, because he was indignant at the misrule of princes in general and of the King of England in particular.

We cannot understand or appreciate Plato's precepts for the conduct of good princes, unless we know that he was disgusted with the despotism of the tyrant Dionysius. Many interesting remarks in Fénelon's *Télémaque* about the same subject would be utterly lost upon the reader, if he did not know that the lessons its author wanted to convey, were meant for his pupil, the Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Lewis XIV, who was one day to be King of France. Conversely, if we are to form a correct estimate of the measures of reform suggested in the Utopian novel, we shall have to make ourselves familiar with the times in which they were written. For it is obvious that in most cases the author will give an *exposé* of contemporary evils and abuses, and that many of his suggestions must be regarded as a reaction against the then prevailing vices. Therefore the social reformer, of all others, ought to be considered in the framework of his time; we cannot take him out of it with impunity; abuses, corruptions, social evils in general that have roused his indignation, and which are treated *in extenso* in the course of his work, may have ceased to exist and his comments may seem to us unintelligible or out of place. The uninitiated, therefore, cannot judge his work unless they have made a serious study of the times in which it was produced.

It lies in the nature of things that the Utopian novel is international. The feelings of discontent about existing conditions, the endeavours to bring about a change for the better, are not confined to one specific country: at all times and all over the world there have been people, who, moved by the sad fate of many of their fellowmen, and feeling ashamed about the deplorable state in which they live, think themselves called upon to take up the cudgels in their behalf. Yet the national element cannot be ignored altogether. Without being aware of it himself, perhaps even without the intention of

doing so, the author will throw into his work some peculiar characteristic, typical of his nationality. Though discussing topics of universal interest, the manner in which his thoughts are expressed, his predilections, his aversions and prejudices, the spirit that pervades the whole — all this will stamp the work as typically English, French, German or American. The German will work out his subjects most methodically and systematically. Showing a special predilection for statistics, he will in the description of his commonwealth bear out his statements with no end of figures. With scrupulous accuracy he will draw up an inventory of the stock in hand ; like an expert auditor he will give a minute account of the assets and liabilities of the State. In the course of his narrative he will, with the help of rows of figures, try to prove the success of the enterprise ; he will tell us by how many members the colony has been increased ; how many horses and cows the State can boast of, how many steamers are used to convey the articles of commerce. Nor is the German love of discipline wanting, and mindful of the maxim “*Ordnung muss sein*”, there are strict regulations concerning the internal government which must be implicitly obeyed, and although militarism is held incompatible with the principle of liberty and equality, in reality the inhabitants of the State form one vast army well disciplined and well trained in the handling of arms.

In the American novels the proverbial practical and business-like spirit of the New World pervades the work throughout. The American will lay special stress on the importance of modern inventions and will apply them in his ideal State to promote the happiness of its subjects. Accordingly he introduces all sorts of existing and non-existing novelties. Everything is done mechanically : machines are used for all kind of work to facilitate the task of the inhabitants, and the author tries to prove that the inventive spirit of man, if made a proper and sensible use of,

will conduce to the happiness and welfare of mankind. That, finally, the national element is not wanting in English romances of the same kind, will be seen in the following pages.

I have in this introductory chapter confined myself to generalities and have tried to point out that the Utopian novels may be grouped into several classes. According to the writer's conception and design four main divisions can be made.

- I. Novels with the enterprising traveller and his marvellous account of unknown parts of the world.
- II. Romances with the "dream-motive", in which the hero after a profound and long sleep awakes to find himself all of a sudden placed in utterly strange but ideal surroundings.
- III. Fictions in which the world is depicted "upside down".
- IV. Narratives which give a slow and systematical development of a perfect State.

Quite different divisions might be made, as was suggested. Based on the political convictions of the writer the Utopian novels may be classified into "monarchical" and "non-monarchical". That another grouping is possible on economical grounds, has been shown on page 2.

I have spoken about the comprehensive task of the Utopian writer: that for him a vast knowledge of an extensive range of different subjects is imperative, and also about the difficulties he has to overcome in treating economical and political problems in an attractive, popular manner. Furthermore it has been pointed out that the Utopian novel reflects the manners and customs of the times in which it is written. Reference has been made to certain obligations on the part of the reader. It will not do for him to laugh good-naturedly at the "funny" or "whimsical" ideas of the author and dismiss them as absurd or ridiculous. The student should be



impressed by the fact that he is not reading an ordinary novel, but that, in order to form a fair estimate of the work, it is incumbent upon him to make himself thoroughly familiar with the contemporary economical and political conditions.

If he has not acquired sufficient knowledge of the period under discussion, he will not be able to understand and appreciate the many passages meant as a sharp critique and bitter satire on the institutions, manners and customs of the times, and his ignorance of the subject will prevent him from forming a good and fair idea of the merits and demerits of the work. Neither should he set about his task with *a priori* prejudices. Let him not condemn the work as something inferior, because it describes ideal, that is non-existent conditions. Though I am myself absolutely convinced of the impracticability of Utopian theories — as literary architects Utopists have reared a beautiful, but uninhabitable edifice — though I am aware of many incongruities, contradictions and errors, about which I shall say more in the concluding chapters, I would remark that we are under great obligations to the authors of this class of literature for many inestimable suggestions on a wide range of social, political and economical problems. Monarchs may still profit by the wise and philosophical lessons contained in Plato's *Republic*, and if the different governments of Europe had listened to the practical lessons about food-distribution in More's *Utopia*, the difficulties of a judicious food-supply, difficulties which proved almost insurmountable in the late war, might have been reduced to a minimum. What Utopists have done to lift up women from the degraded position of inferiority in which society had placed them, insisting with indomitable energy and indefatigable zeal on equalization of sexes, will be readily admitted by all those that have consulted Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*. In many of their suggestions these writers have cast a prophetic glance into the future, and it is not until quite recently that women have begun to occupy a

position of equality to which they are justly entitled. In the hygienic and sanitary regulations applied by the inhabitants of More's commonwealth, we see a foreshadowing of the medical examination before marriage, which of late has very seriously drawn the attention of the authorities.

That Utopian ideas cannot transform the world into an earthly paradise, is obvious, but that they will materially contribute to bring a decided change for the better in the general state of affairs, is equally true. In our estimation of the Utopian novel all these points should be most carefully considered, for it is the fair critic that can pass a fair judgment.

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## CHAPTER II.

### PLATO.

In our treatment of ideal commonwealths we shall first of all have to turn our attention to classical Greece, from which we should not conclude that before this brilliant period in history people lived in a state of perfection and that there was no ground whatsoever for any discontentment. History provides us with many instances of despotism of oriental monarchs, of a state of deplorable bondage of their subjects, of extravagant luxury and fabulous riches, of stringent poverty and dire want, but, although allusions to these evils are made in oriental and Arabic tales, we do not hear of writers who, moved with compassion at the hard fate of their fellowmen, felt called upon to act as social reformers and to embody their ideas on social improvements in a kind of state-romance. Even granted that such works exist at all, they would be of no particular importance for us, for this reason that it is not to the Orient that we have to look for any Utopian influences. It is the country of the old Hellenes which must be considered as the cradle of the Utopian novel. Homer, long before Plato, paints his Elysium, idealised as a beautiful meadow, where the departed heroes live in perfect happiness, where strife and discord are not known, and where harmony and peace prevail. It is in Greek literature that a craving for a blissful state became manifest, it is the Greeks who made a serious and deep study of the problem of government and one of the most earnest students of this subject was Plato. His ideas about what he considered the best form of government, he laid down in his world-famous *Republic*. It is this work which



became the prototype of the Utopian novel, which provided later writers with ample material to work upon. His name is, therefore, indissolubly connected with the origin and development of Utopian ideas. In more than one respect the classical reformer stands out unique among all other writers of his class. He, at least, understood human nature well enough to realise that an ideal State is an impossibility. "Would a painter be any the worse," he says in his *Republic* <sup>1)</sup>, "because, after having delineated with consummate art an ideal of a perfectly beautiful man, he was unable to show that any such man could ever have existed." Similarly we have tried to give a picture of a perfect State, by which we have not yet proved that such a State can actually be founded.

Born at Athens or Aegina in 427 B. C. Plato had witnessed a very sad period in Greek history. In the golden age of Athenian power and culture, when the reins of government were in the hands of Pericles, Athens reached the zenith of her literary and artistic glory. In the galaxy of great names, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Cratinus, Aristophanes, Pindar, and Pheidias shine supreme. The beautiful city was a veritable haunt of the Muses. Then came the great war, which, though ostensibly a duel between the two rival cities, Athens and Sparta, was in reality a racial conflict between Ionians and Dorians, and a political struggle between democratic and oligarchic principles. The war, which raged from 431 B. C. to 404 B. C. and terminated in the destruction of Athens, drained Greece of her resources and left her weak and spiritless, an easy prey to her enemies. Whether Plato took an active part in the military proceedings of the latter half of this war, is not quite certain, but a fact it is that its horrors left a very vivid impression upon his susceptible mind. The setting up of the government of Thirty first

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1) Bk. V. *The Dialogues of Plato* by B. Jowett, Oxford, 1892, Vol. III. p. 169.

pleased him, but the tyranny of the unscrupulous and treacherous leaders led him to withdraw from all connection with the oligarchy. This was in short the political aspect of Greece in his days. As a lover of his country Plato could not but deplore the lamentable condition into which his country had sunk under the misrule of despotic and corrupt tyrants. Prompted by a noble desire of improving conditions, he inquired into the causes of the evils and abuses, which he studied with ever absorbing interest. His task was not an easy one. Reformers in general, and social reformers in particular, are often shamefully misjudged, because they will advocate principles that clash with private interests. This Plato experienced when he wanted to educate princes and prepare them for the tremendous task that was laid upon their shoulders. It is no easy task to instruct tyrannical and despotic rulers whose judgment has been perverted by the evil advice of flattering courtiers and wicked counsellors. Plato realised these difficulties, but did not shirk his duty, when he was called to Sicily to instruct Dionysius the Younger, who had succeeded his father Dionysius I as tyrant of Syracuse. The prince was indolent and dissolute, and it was at the special request of Dion, his father's son-in-law, who thought to improve him, that Plato was invited to the court to charge himself with the education of the young monarch. For a while the tutor was successful, but a faction led by Philistus the historian, succeeded in poisoning the ruler's mind against both Dion and Plato, who were banished, the latter barely escaping with his life. Thereupon Dionysius gave himself up again to unrestrained debauchery. Plato's conduct in this case has warmly appealed to me. His visit to an ignoble and immoral prince with whom he was sure to come into serious conflict, not only shows his great personal courage and his self-denial for the well-being of his fellowmen, but it brings out most clearly that he was in great earnest about his social reforms. Macaulay in his *Critical and*

*Historical Essays* <sup>1)</sup> correctly remarks how difficult it is to judge fairly of a character with whom we sympathize; we do not like to hear unfavourable remarks about him, we are inclined to bring the good qualities to the fore and to pass his shortcomings in silence. The truth of these words was brought home to me, when studying Plato's *Republic*. Critics have been hard upon its writer, have exposed his shortcomings—his communism developing tendencies which made it the butt of much ridicule — but we should never forget that the debt we owe him is incalculable. The fundamental principle on which his State is based: communism, has been borrowed by his imitators, not one excepted. Plato's thoughts pervade practically all Utopian novels; in one we may find, in a modified form perhaps, his ideas about the rule of philosophers, in another his views on education of women, on equalization of sexes; in short, his work became the source from which his followers drew abundantly. As to the extent of his influence on later works, critics differ widely and the most divergent opinions are held on the subject. To give a concrete example. De Gibbins in his *English Social Reformers* calls More's *Utopia* a "Christian version of Plato's *Republic*, adapted to the new social order" <sup>2)</sup> by which he means to intimate that the classical influence is very marked indeed; whereas the *Cambridge History* maintains, "The *Utopia* may have been suggested by Plato's *Republic* — the names it contains are Greek — but the books have little in common." <sup>3)</sup>

Between these two extremes opinions range. Even making due allowance for the subjective views of the commentators — an element that cannot altogether be ignored — it is hardly imaginable that there can be so little agreement as to the influence of Plato's work on later Utopists. This mystery is somewhat solved, when we consider

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1) See introductory remarks in his essay on Lord Bacon.

2) H. de B. Gibbins, *English Social Reformers*, London 1892, p. 59.

3) *Cambridge History*, Vol. III. Ch. I. p. 18.



that, though his writings have undoubtedly had their share in the student's interest, hardly any systematic investigation has been made on this subject. We have to put up with such vague and indefinite statements as, "Plato's influence is undeniable" or "the classical influence can easily be traced", statements which carry no conviction with them as long as they are not borne out by conclusive proofs. It is true, Eduard Zeller has written an article on *Der Platonische Staat in seiner Bedeutung für die Folgezeit*,<sup>1)</sup> but he treats the subject in a general way, not drawing a parallel between Plato's works and those of later Utopists. As I think it desirable, even imperative to throw some light on this problem, I shall in the following pages give an analysis of the *Republic*, which we shall have to consider as our groundplan for further researches.

Plato's *Republic* is written in dialogues; the main discussions are carried on by Socrates, Glaucus and Adimantus, the latter being the chief interlocutor. This method of inquiry is really a method of teaching, in which, by the help of these interrogators the same problem or thesis is looked at from various points of view. From a didactic standpoint the advantage of this style is incalculable: it not only serves to establish an intimate contact between "teacher and pupils", but the constant questions put to him enable the master to see whether his ideas are thoroughly understood.

Plato does not underrate the difficulties of his task. The constitution and the development of a State entail the solution of many intricate problems. The idea of a community lies in human nature itself. No individual can live in absolute independence; each, therefore, will invite the co-operation of others, and the resulting association constitutes the State. The community is consequently the offspring of mutual need. Man is not born to live a solitary life

Develop-  
ment of  
the State.

1) *Vorträge und Abhandlungen*, Leipzig 1875, p. 68.

— but here the trouble begins. Plato touches upon a vital question, when he stresses the indisputable fact that the community is composed of individuals with human imperfections and faults, and not of creatures that have reached an ideal stage of perfection. Prof. Maurice in his *Social Morality* refers to the same problem, when he remarks, "A collection of Individuals is a dangerous collection. For they have great powers of injuring each other — claws, talons, hoofs of a very alarming kind. Who are their keepers? What arts of taming do they practise? These are questions which History has to answer, which press very heavily upon the Social Moralist. He is often disposed to cut them short with an answer of this kind. There can be no Society until this Individuality is extinguished. Men cannot behave to each other as they ought, while each is striving to assert himself".<sup>1)</sup> Though there is some Swiftian cynicism in this passage, Professor Maurice is right in the main. Modern times illustrate the truth of this statement clearly enough, a truth which is altogether ignored by Plato's successors, who seem to take for granted that the members of their community are perfect beings, who will readily accept and implicitly obey the economical and social arrangements made for them, as if they held the same views about happiness and public welfare, as if there were no such thing as personal insight and independent judgment. A system which gives no scope to individual initiative, in which private enterprise is killed, in which people have to adapt their lives to a ruthlessly enforced plan of state-organization cannot be conducive to the happiness of the community.

Division  
of Labour

Plato then passes on to the discussion of another, no less important question: the division of labour, a problem which at all times has troubled the minds of the greatest political economists. The necessa-

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1) F. D. Maurice, *Social Morality*, London, Macmillan 1872, p. III.

ries of life must be provided for. Who is to do this, and how is this to be done? In his commonwealth, which, in its initial stage, consists of four or five members, the leading principles are : let each individual follow his own inclination in the choice of his profession, with this restriction, however, that he must produce enough of his commodity to supply the rest. We suppose that one man is a husbandman, a second a shoemaker, a third a carpenter, a fourth a weaver. These four would constitute the smallest State imaginable. Plato points out that it is natural that the husbandman should provide for all, similarly the shoemaker make boots not only for himself but for all, in other words, each of them should work for the community, for this simple reason that a husbandman cannot be a shoemaker, a weaver all in one. The members of the State should, therefore, mutually profit by each other's labour. This part (Bk. II) contains a masterful exposition of Plato's ideas about labour-division, and it is said that the greatest political economists (Adam Smith included) have not surpassed him in this respect. For us the problem affords a fit opportunity of comparing the ideas of later Utopists on the same subject, which we intend to do in its proper place.

The community is quickly growing in size, people will produce more than they want, the subsequent over-production will lead to exportation, and this to the creation of a mercantile class. There must also be ships and sailors, and as exchange within the State grows more complex, a currency is established, and a class of retail merchants is created.<sup>1)</sup> People will no longer be satisfied with the prime necessities of life, but will get accustomed to a certain degree of luxury. Then follows an exposition of the pernicious influence of luxury : how it excites all kinds of ignoble qualities in man,

Extension  
of the  
State and  
its conse-  
quences.

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1) In his views on the necessity of foreign trade Plato stands practically alone, later Utopists condemning commerce as the worst form of usury.



notably envy and jealousy, how it fosters greed, for the more we have, the more we wish to possess. We shall no longer be content with the boundaries of our original territory, nor our neighbours with theirs: each will covet a portion of the other's land. And so we shall go to war, which is the source of so many evils.<sup>1)</sup>

About  
the guar-  
dians.

The chance of war necessitates the creation of a new class, the soldier-class, which, like the other categories, will devote itself exclusively to its own pursuits. These protectors of the State, whom Plato calls guardians, have to come up to very special requirements, as their task is an important one. The humorous element is not wanting, when they are compared to watchdogs, which are fierce to strangers, but gentle to those they know. That Plato dwells at great length on the education of the guardians, becomes clear, when we know that out of this class the rulers of the State are chosen. In their youth they are to be educated in gymnastic and music<sup>2)</sup>, gymnastic for the body, music for the soul. Plato proves himself a pre-eminent pedagogue, when he lays full stress on the extreme importance of early impressions and on the necessity of legislation even for these first beginnings of education. A very strong censorship is put upon stories. In the choice of them we have to be very particular; there shall be no immoral or misleading fairy tales which are apt to insinuate wrong notions and may be injurious to the young and receptive mind. It is of the highest moment that the guardians should have no false or wrong conception about God, who must be represented as He really is: good and true, and who punishes only to improve. Therefore the poets that cause young men to fear God by false representation ought to be highly con-

1) I would point here to a very close analogy between Plato and More: both showing an inveterate hatred of greed, both having witnessed the deplorable effects of this vice on contemporary monarchs: Dionysius of Syracuse for the former, Henry VIII of England for the latter.

2) In the classical sense of the term.

demned. When Plato says, "God is good, He can never be the author of evil; if, therefore, human calamities are referred to God, they were inflicted for the good of those on whom they fell," he may be called the forerunner of Christianity. The guardians must also be brave and courageous; therefore no awful or fulsome stories should be told them about the nether-world. Altogether they receive during their youth many wise lessons, which in modern education are looked upon as "old-fashioned", when they are told to treat older people with due respect and in no case ridicule them. Self-control and self-restraint are qualities that must be inculcated upon them from the very beginning, together with a deep love of truth and veracity. Education should especially be directed towards the edification of the mind. Meanwhile their physical education is not neglected either, and again general rules are laid down for their special training. When all this has been discussed at great length, the question is put: which of them are to be placed in command? Who are to be the rulers of the State? Plato is of opinion — and here his democratic spirit becomes manifest — that the rulers shall be of ripe age and appointed on the principle of merit. The Government shall not pass from father to son, but to him who possesses the qualities of a good ruler. Before settling the question what is understood by a good ruler of the State, and what qualities we must expect in him, Plato first advances his theories about the four cardinal virtues in a perfect community: justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance, the principal of these being justice. This part of the *Republic* is of such vital importance that the question has been put by Morgenstern<sup>1)</sup>, "What is the professed aim of the work: the construction of the State or the definition of justice?"

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1) Morgenstern, cited by Jowett on pp. 6, 78 and 169 of the introduction to his translation of the *Republic*. Jowett evidently refers to C. Morgenstern, *De Platonis Republica*, Halis Saxonum, 1794, but I could not find the passage alluded to in this work.

I think the answer must be : the two form one inseparable whole and blend in one, for Plato very emphatically points out that a State is the visible embodiment of justice : justice and the State are the warp and the woof that run through the whole texture. When Plato asks for the definition of this virtue, we may say that he has touched the keynote of the whole work. Before looking for it in the State, we have to start from the individual. Justice is a quality of the soul ; the human soul is just, when reason predominates and covetousness is brought under perfect control.<sup>1)</sup> To make his meaning clearer still, Plato contrasts it with injustice, which he calls a psychological disease.<sup>2)</sup> Injustice unites in itself all kinds of bad and ignoble qualities, such as cowardice and excess. After having dwelt at great length on this subject, Plato leads us up to the climax of the argument, the quintessence of all : is it possible to found a perfect State ? Plato is of opinion that it is not, for this reason that we shall look in vain for a man who is perfectly just. Here again the classic writer stands out far above his followers : where we cannot find perfection in the individual, we cannot expect to find it in the State, which is a collection of these individuals. That perfection is an unattainable ideal lies in human nature itself. Yet we must all strive after perfection, try to come to it as near as possible ; this is our sacred duty. Apart from the ethical lessons, the passage is of great value for another reason. By a thorough and elaborate discussion of the cardinal virtues, Plato wants to emphasise the tremendous task that is laid on the ruler of the State ; for unless he governs his country in accordance with the principles of justice, he will do no end of harm to his subjects. And again the question is put, "Who shall be the rulers of the State ?" And the famous answer is, "No State shall be happy, unless philosophers

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1) See Bk. IV.

2) "Injustice and justice are like disease and health ; being in the soul just what disease and health are in the body." (Bk. IV, p. 137. Jowett's edition).



be rulers or rulers philosophers".<sup>1)</sup> Here the culminating point of the dialogue is reached. No improvement can be expected, unless kings, and all those in authority apply themselves heart and soul to the study of philosophy. He who is to be trained in philosophy must be quick-witted and have a good memory; he must be a lover of all truth, a hater of falsehood, courageous, temperate, just, gentle, large-minded, gracious in his thoughts and ways. The tests which we demand for the rulers will be more severe than those previously required. Therefore they have to acquire a very extensive general knowledge, and as they must be men who love truth and hate oppression, they will take measures that are conducive to the welfare of their subjects. Plato wants these rulers — provided they come up to these qualities — to be endowed with unlimited power, and exhorts the people to consult them, that they may profit by their wise lessons. So it is the philosophers who ought to govern the State. That this, alas, is not the case, is, according to Plato, not the fault of the philosophers, but of the people themselves, who, generally speaking, are not philosophically inclined and cannot, therefore, duly appreciate their work.<sup>2)</sup> Accordingly the philosophers, far from being honoured, are looked upon as useless and worthless subjects. Being keenly alive to the contempt in which they are held, and smarting under it, they retire into privacy, and Plato bitterly remarks that they who ought to be the leaders of the people, are the very men that live in obscurity. In one of the most suggestive allegories he likens the philosophers to people living in an underground den which is open towards the light, and who are chained with their backs towards a fire, gazing

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1) See Bk. V. Jowett's edition, p. 170.

2) In an article "Gelijkheid" by A. G. Mörzer Bruyns in "Vragen van den Dag", Vol. 37. p. 368, the writer advocates excellent education for especially clever people who may be called upon to take a leading position in the State. In this passage I am strongly reminded of the part assigned to Plato's philosophers, and I wonder why the writer has not referred to him while working out his ideas.

at the shadows on the wall and mistaking these shadows for realities. The education of the philosophers is represented by the toilsome struggle of some of these prisoners to reach the outer world and the bright light of the sun. In this simile the cave or den stands for the world of sight, the fire for the sun, and by the path upward from the den to the outer world is meant the way to knowledge and truth, the elevation of the soul into the intellectual region, whereof the idea of good is the crown or summit. He who has once seen the sun, will recognise the truth about him, and when he has attained so far, will not wish himself back in the den, and if he were restored to his old place, while his eyes were still unaccustomed to the darkness, his fellow-prisoners (= the ignorant and uninitiated) would laugh him to scorn and say that philosophy was the ruin of man. Plato then concludes that philosophy will not be disgraced, when the rulers are subjected to a very careful course of training. At twenty the selected pupils must begin a ten years' course of mental discipline; at thirty a further selection should be made, and those finally sifted by the help of dialectic, for the select class may be promoted to still higher honours. The privileged ones are then severely put to the test. After the first course of dialectic, which is to last five years, the dialectician is to come down to practical life and for fifteen years he is to hold subordinate offices of state. If they have acquitted themselves satisfactorily of their task, they are, at fifty, to renew the study of dialectic, finally to be admitted into the select and choice band of rulers. Having determined the great questions of state-communism and of the philosophizing, Plato proceeds to describe the four principal false forms of political society (Bk. VIII). We shall not follow him there, his remarks having no special value for a comparison with his imitators. For our purpose it is of great importance to notice that Plato's *Republic* is constructed on the principles of communism and ruled by philosophers, and that there are three classes of citizens: rulers,

guardians and producers. The two former may be called two divisions of one great class, answering to the rational and courageous elements in the human soul. The third is treated as of a lower order. To this class hardly any attention is paid ; it may possess property, and may live its life in its own way. But the rulers who have to control, and the guardians who have to defend the common State, must be carefully and laboriously trained. No study, no preparation is too great for them. Their wives must be such among the women as are fitted by mental and bodily qualifications for propagating a lofty race. That being the only object, no private attachments must be allowed. The children born to them must be separated from their parents, and brought up as the children of the State. In other words : Plato extends his ideas about community of goods to community of wives and children. It should be borne in mind that throughout his work there is this ruling idea, that everything must be done to promote the welfare of the community, from which it follows that the wishes of the individual are made subservient to the interests of the State. For the propagation of a lofty race the authorities point out the couples for marriage, much in the same manner as a farmer couples his strongest animals. As in animals we should commonly choose the best for breeding, and destroy the others, so there must be a selection made of the human beings whose lives are worthy to be preserved. That this Platonic principle clashes with the Christian ideas about noble feelings for the weak, is evident. Altogether he has carried his communistic principles to a dangerous extreme, and his maxims on this subject have given rise to much and serious comment. Plato entertains ideas of morality which to our minds are revolting, for he regards the human being from the standpoint of a director of a zoological garden, who is only intent on ennobling the species. Love, the tie of affection between husband and wife, does not exist in his community, where strength and health seem the only desirable qualities in man. And



yet, has not history shown to us that many of the noblest specimens of the human race are often physically weakest ? And what about the children which, being at an early age weaned from their parents, are nothing but foundlings in the State ? They have a father and a mother, but may not know them. Who is to supply the sympathy of a mother ? Plato advocates measures for the improvement of the race ; I am afraid that if they were ever put into practice, many of the children thus brought up, would perish.

About  
the social  
position  
of women.

For the sake of unity, I have first given a survey of the communistic views propagated in the *Republic*. In the midst of his argumentations Plato is, however, interrupted by one of his interlocutors. Adamantus (Bk. V), who is anxious to know his opinion about the social position of women in the State. As regards this subject Plato proves that he is far in advance of his times. Important pioneer's work is done by him, when he insists on a position of equality to which women are justly entitled. Women are equal to men, not inferior. Therefore Plato wants them to be carefully educated and likewise be taught music and gymnastic, even the art of war ; however, in the distribution of labours the lighter should be assigned to the women, who are the weaker ; in other respects their duties should be the same. Where Plato endeavours to raise women to a higher level, it is somewhat strange and contradictory that he lowers them to a degrading position by assigning them by lot to the men.

When I add that the guardians take their meals in common, that they discard the use of precious metals for money (Bk. III), I believe I have stressed those points to which special attention will have to be paid in the course of our investigations.

For a correct estimate of the classical influence on later Utopists, it is not sufficient to consider Plato's *Republic* only : casual remarks which nobody has checked, such as "the general description of Utopia is plainly modelled on Plato's picture of

Atlantis in the *Critias*"<sup>1)</sup> necessitates a closer examination of this classical source.

In his introduction and analysis of the *Critias*<sup>2)</sup> Jowett says that the whole narrative about Atlantis is due to the imagination of Plato, who has used the name of Solon to give verisimilitude to his story, but adds that it appears strange that later ages should have been imposed upon by the fiction, many attempts having been made to find the great island of Atlantis without a suspicion that the whole narrative is only a fabrication. Explorers have looked for the spot in every part of the globe: America, Arabia, &c. Whether true or not, Plato's wonderful fiction has given birth to endless historical and geographical enquiries, the subject having of late again attracted the attention of geologists, who are not so positive as to the non-existence of the island as Jowett, and who allege that great geological changes may have been effected by water, which makes it difficult to define its exact place. It is a very remarkable circumstance — and I am surprised that this point has not yet been duly emphasised — that in this brief sketch Plato idealises the husbandman of whom he says hardly anything in his *Republic*. Why the *Critias* was never completed, whether from accident, or from a sense of the artistic difficulty of the design, cannot be determined.

After having invoked the aid of Mnemosyne, Critias commences his tale. About nine thousand years ago a war took place between Athens and Atlantis which was greater in extent than Libya and Asia<sup>3)</sup> and afterwards disappeared during an earthquake. In his description of the two countries he gives precedence to Athens. This country was then inhabited by various classes of citizens; there were artisans and husbandmen, and there was also a warrior-

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1) Churton Collins in his edition of More's *Utopia*.

2) *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. III. p. 529. (Jowett's edition).

3) = Asia Minor.

class. These warriors dwelt by themselves, had no private property, but shared all they had in common. The women were also trained in military pursuits <sup>1)</sup>. The land was cultivated by true husbandmen, who made husbandry their business, and who were of a noble nature. They had dwellings in common and had erected halls for dining in winter. They also had temples, but they did not adorn them with gold and silver, for they made no use of them <sup>1)</sup>. After Critias has wound up his tale of the ancient Athenians, how righteously they administered their own land, and how highly they were esteemed all over Europe and Asia, he proceeds to give an account of their adversaries.

Historical  
sketch  
and de-  
scription  
of the  
island.

Looking towards the sea, but in the centre of the whole island there was a plain, said to have been very fertile and beautiful. Near this plain, and likewise in the centre of the island, there was a mountain. In this mountain there dwelt one of the earth-born primeval men of that country, whose name was Evenor. He had a wife, called Leucippe, by whom he had an only daughter, called Cleito. The maiden had already reached womanhood, when her father and mother died. Poseidon, who had received the island of Atlantis from the Gods, fell in love with her. He begat and brought up five pairs of twin male children, and dividing the island of Atlantis into ten portions, gave each of his children a part; the eldest he named Atlas, and after him the whole island and the ocean were called Atlantis. Atlas was the first king, the other sons he made princes. All these and their descendants for many generations were the inhabitants and rulers of the island. Poseidon had surrounded the hill in which Cleito lived with alternate zones of sea and land. His successors constructed bridges over the zones, dug a deep and wide canal from the sea to the outermost zone, where they built

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1) With which compare the *Republic*.



an excellent harbour which was accessible to the largest vessels. The canal was three hundred feet in width, one hundred feet in depth, and fifty stadia in length. The docks were full of triremes and naval stores. The city lay in an oblong plain, surrounded by mountains which descended abruptly into the sea. The whole country was lofty and precipitous on the side of the ocean, but the country immediately surrounding the city was a level plain, itself hemmed in by mountains which descended towards the sea ; it was smooth and even, and of an oblong shape, extending in one direction three thousand stadia, but across the centre island it was two thousand stadia. The plain was rectangular and oblong, and where falling out of the straight line, followed the circular ditch. The depth, width, and length of this ditch were incredible and gave the impression that a work of such an extent could never have been artificial. Yet it was. It received the stream which came down from the mountains, and winding round the plain and meeting at the city, was there let off into the sea. Further inland there were straight canals which were let off into the ditch leading to the sea.

The virtues of the people in Atlantis were great, but in course of time the inhabitants grew weaker and degenerated. Zeus, perceiving that an honourable race was in a woeful plight, and wanting to inflict punishment on them, that they might be chastened and improved, collected all his Gods and spoke as follows : — Here the tale, which might have been very interesting, abruptly ends.

About the  
people.

It is well known that a similar account of Atlantis occurs in the *Timæus*, but as it is less extensive, no special mention shall be made of it here. Nor need we, for purposes of comparison, give an analysis of another quite different work which has made its influence felt on later Utopian writers : St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. When necessary, we shall refer to it in the course of this work.

In this chapter we have hinted at the divergent opinions as to the extent of the classical influence and sincerely hope that the suggestions made in the following pages may serve as a check on dangerous illusions not only, but that they may also give an impetus to fresh ideas among those interested in this study.

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## CHAPTER III

### PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

It is at first sight a curious circumstance that the interval between the appearance of two of the most famous ideal commonwealths, Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia* should be so remarkably great. Roughly speaking it covers a period of about nineteen hundred years, and the question naturally arises : how is it that during all this time we do not hear of any writers who attempt a description of an imaginary State with perfect social, economical, and political conditions, whereas after the publication of More's *Utopia* — an epoch making event — literary products of a similar tendency follow one another in comparatively quick succession in England as well as in other countries ? Are we to infer from this that conditions had in general improved so materially that there was no cause for complaint, that people lived in perfect contentment and were quite satisfied with the conditions then prevailing ? In mocking answer to this question I involuntarily call to mind the romance of *Ivanhoe*. What a brilliant picture Sir Walter Scott gives us of the state and condition of the English people towards the end of the 12th century ! What an utterly disorganised society he presents to us. There is the proud Norman baron, from whom all sense of law has departed ; there is the discontented Saxon proprietor with his inveterate hatred of his oppressors ; there is Gurth, the serf ; there is Robin Hood and the foresters, who bear such clear testimony that the world is out of joint, and who fancy that they are born to set it right ! There is last not least a weak tyrannical and contemptible king, who, far from being a father to the people,



treats his subjects as beings of another creation than himself. No monarch who, by wise conciliation, by respect to their rights, by a dignified appeal to their patriotism, ever tried to win the affection of his people. The very mention of such words as oppression and slavery dismisses any thoughts of an ideal commonwealth as absurd and preposterous. And Scott — to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for having excited an interest for the traditions and manners of Old England — has not overdrawn his picture, nor has he exaggerated facts. From the earliest times there had been three ranks in the State: in the Anglo-Saxon period the thegn (thane), the ceorl and the villain; in medieval times: the baron, the freeholder and the slave. The third class was the most numerous by far; their number having been highly increased by the wars. We remember the words of Plato, who in his *Republic* exhorted the people to treat their prisoners with great forbearance and clemency — now one of the leading Christian principles — and how his lesson was followed up in the Middle Ages, when the victors degraded their prisoners to a state of the most abject slavery. For no rank saved the prisoner taken in battle from this inevitable doom, and though according as the Christian faith got a firmer footing in the kingdom the conditions of the villains improved in certain respects, they were practically considered as part of the live-stock of the estate to which they belonged. In course of time we see an interesting progress going on, a process to which Scott alludes in his first chapter of *Ivanhoe*: the class of free men degrades into a state of mere bondage, the ravages and the depredations of hostile tribes compelling them to seek protection from the barons at the cost of their independence, for safety was promised them on condition that they surrendered their land to the lord from whom they received it back as a fief. From this moment they ceased to be independent freeholders and had to serve their lord and follow him to the field. The husbandman, who in the Utopian novel is made most of — for

the Utopists value man according to his utility — was in the period under discussion not more than a mere tool in his master's hands. His interests were in no way considered; there was no law to protect him against the barbarity of cruel tyrants. As to the rulers of the land very few could in honour apply to themselves the words of Alfred the Great, "So long as I have lived, I have striven to live worthily". To live worthily meant for King Alfred a life of justice, temperance and self-sacrifice. When Plato in his *Republic* pathetically asks, "May there not be a king who is also a philosopher?" we imagine that Alfred the Great approaches the picture of the philosopher-king very near. However, the kings in the Middle Ages were, generally speaking, not like Alfred the Great. Far from striving to secure peace and rest in their kingdom and to benefit their subjects by wise and just laws, they rather looked after their own interests. And as these interests, fostered by greed, rapacity and ambition meant in most cases increase of wealth, increase of power at the cost of their people, the inevitable consequences were constant friction and strife between the king and his subjects. Nor was there any harmony or good understanding between the different ranks in the State, a circumstance from which the king profited greatly. If the monarch was sadly in need of money, or if he wanted to curtail the power of the mighty barons who thwarted him in his designs, he secured the help of the wealthy towns by granting them privileges. If the barons in their turn revolted from the despotism of their ruler, they sided with the townsmen whose enemies they usually were. Under the various burdens imposed by this unhappy state of affairs, the people suffered deeply. Worse was to come, however, when the king, driven by an insatiable desire of extending his dominions, involved his people in disastrous wars. We think of the rapacious Edward III, who began a bloody war, because he wanted to be King of France, thus sacrificing thousands of his countrymen for the gratification of his own selfish

desires. To augment the misery the people were afflicted by a contagious disorder of a most dangerous nature: the plague. Statutes tell us of the destructive pestilence devastating Europe from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Baltic, invading England and sweeping away more than one half of the three or four million who then formed the population of England. Apart from any other considerations, so grievous a calamity clearly shows a total ignorance of the most elementary principles of hygiene and sanitation. For the disease, dreadful in itself, was rendered more virulent by the uncleanness, the indifferent food and the wretched lodging of the lower classes. Summarising, we come to the conclusion that instead of peace and rest, there was civil disturbance and commotion, instead of harmony and concord, hatred and jealousy, instead of liberty and freedom, oppression and despotism. One would say that amidst these accumulated distresses there was an excellent opportunity for the clergy to practise in a general way the lessons of self-denial and self-sacrifice taught them by their great predecessor Christ. In the New Testament Christ exhorts the rich to be mindful of the hard fate of the poor and inculcates upon his disciples a contempt of earthly treasures. Of the difficulties Christ had encountered, the Bible gives us ample proof. I only refer here to the meeting between Jesus and the rich youth, to whom the Teacher spoke these memorable words, "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven<sup>1)</sup>. But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions."<sup>2)</sup> I wonder whether Utopists have ever reflected on this passage, when in their works they talk about equal division of property as the commonest thing in the world, as if it were for all parties concerned the most satisfactory solution of the problem.

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1) St. Matthew, XIX. 21.

1) St. Matthew, XIX. 22.



We find how Christ lifts up the poor and tries to edify them, not by promising them earthly treasures, because they would then be placed in the same position as the rich whom they envy and who ought really to be pitied. Christ is constantly fighting against materialism ; He never tires of showing people that there are higher aims than the acquisition of earthly goods. It is gratifying to see that the members of the first Christian community seriously endeavoured to put the wise lessons of their Master into practice. "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common ; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved." <sup>1)</sup> With which compare the Acts, Ch. IV. 32, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul ; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things in common." "And those that were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need." <sup>2)</sup> And again the well-known story about Ananias and his wife Sapphira, <sup>3)</sup> who want to keep part of their property and who are severely punished for it <sup>4)</sup>. Let us now inquire how the Church acquitted itself of its sacred task and in how far its servants showed themselves worthy apostles of the Faith. In the beginning we see how the principles of love and humanity were observed by improving the fate of the slaves

1) The Acts, Ch. II. 44-47.

2) The Acts, Ch. IV 34—35.

3) The Acts, Ch. V.

4) Compare also : A. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*. Leipzig, 1906.

and obtaining for them better labour-conditions. How they gave the great push to the emancipation of the bondsmen, when, in the Crusades, liberty was promised to those that took an active part in them <sup>1)</sup>).

The principle of common property the Church applied in its institution of monasteries, which might be called communities on a religious basis. But the maxim "*dulcissima rerum possessio communis est*" was *only* applied to religious affairs, for there was a sharp line of demarcation between the clergy and the laity, and soon the clergy began to consider themselves as a privileged order. Instead of humble, devoting servants they became ambitious and imperious masters. Far from promoting the spiritual welfare of the people, they rather looked after their own interests. At a comparatively early age they had inculcated the necessity of penance and atonement for sin, and having again introduced the practice of paying them large sums of money for the remission of those penances, the sins of the people by these means had become a revenue to the clergy. In course of time the Church developed into a rich and proud institution, surrounded and supported by wealthy monasteries. Add to this that the ecclesiastics in the Middle Ages were exempt, in criminal accusations, from a trial before courts of justice, and it is not difficult to understand that many priests had taken holy orders attracted by the privileges attached to that rank, priests that were utterly unfit and unworthy of being the spiritual guides of their fellowmen. <sup>2)</sup> That very little good came of the teaching

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1) These Crusades I am bound to say here, were not merely an outburst of religious zeal, it took into close alliance strong motives of political ambition ; a religious Crusade was for the Church a glorious opportunity to break the power of rival sovereigns. The hope of plunder was in itself sufficient incentive to the baser adventurers ; to the nobles there was the chivalrous passion for war and enterprise, while the easier mode of obtaining pardon for sins brought the believers of all ranks under the consecrated banner.

2) The following may further illustrate the low state of the clergy : instead of the old proverb for the lowest abasement, "I had rather my son were a Jew", people said, "I had rather he were a priest".

of such churchmen is exemplified in the manners and customs of the times.

Now in our present researches the two great points for us to decide are these : did the general feelings of discontent find utterance in historical events and was the spirit of the times reflected in contemporary literature ? Both questions may be answered in the affirmative. Among the lower classes there slumbered under the appearance of sullen despondency a sense of oppression and a disposition to resistance. This growing discontent, this struggle for freedom and independence, this strife against tyranny and despotism manifested itself practically all over Europe. In Holland there is the characteristic "Kennemeropstand" of 1268, pointing to a great discontent among the suppressed lower classes, a remarkable event, as the insurgents proposed a division of property on a communistic basis<sup>1</sup>), and later on the strife between the "Hoekschen" and "Kabeljauwschen". In France there is a similar seditious movement among the peasantry well known under the name of "Jacquerie" in the year 1358, when the villains availed themselves of the weakened position of the nobles, who in the hundred years' war had considerably decreased in number. "Guerre aux palois, paix aux chaumières" was their device and "détruire tous les nobles et gentilshommes du monde" their purpose. We know how the revolt was rigorously quelled, how one of their leaders, Guillaume Callet was treacherously murdered, and how this struggle entailed the death of twenty thousand people. In his *Histoire de France* Michelet gives us a very vivid sketch of the sufferings of the peasant-classes. "Avant la guerre, celui-ci (le paysan) s'était épuisé pour fournir aux magnificences des seigneurs.

1 See Prof. Dr. P. J. Blok : *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk*, Leiden 1912. Vol. I. Ch. VII p. 225. about the Kennemers and their "vulgaris communitas". Mr. S. Muller, *De Middeleeuwsche Rechtsbronnen der Stad Utrecht*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1885, p. 19, note 5 and p. 20. De Bosch Kemper : *De Staatkundige Geschiedenis van Nederland*, p. 29, and Arend : *Geschiedenis des Vaderlands*. Vol. II. pp. 340—342.



pour payer ces belles armes, ces écussons émaillés, ces riches bannières qui se firent prendre à Crecy et à Poitiers. Après, qui payâ la rançon ? ce fut encore le paysan". And about the Jacquerie itself. "Les Jacques payèrent à leurs seigneurs une arrière de plusieurs siècles. Ce fut une vengeance de désespérés, de damnés. Ils n'égorgeaient pas seulement leurs seigneurs, mais tâchaient d'exterminer les familles, tuant les jeunes héritiers, tuant l'honneur en violant les dames".<sup>1)</sup>

A little later there is the well-known struggle in England which resulted in the notorious Peasants' Revolt under Wat Tyler, the direct cause being the scarcity of labourers on account of the Black Death and the subsequent rise of wages. The Statute of Labourers or rather the "Statute d'Artificers et Servants", to use the official legal language of the day, enforced the labourer under certain conditions to serve the employer "who shall require him to do so", and provided maximum wages. This system of forced labour, which was applied with great rigour, came at a very inopportune moment, at a time when the general feeling of independence, when a longing for a right rule, for plain and simple justice became stronger and stronger. The people felt that they had been deprived of what they considered as their due, and now claimed their share. The most remarkable aspect of this revolt is perhaps that the rebels were also incited by priests, one of whom, John Ball, has been immortalised by Froissart as "the mad priest of Kent".

In Germany finally there is the "Bauern Aufstand", which was no less bloody than the other, and which likewise ended in the subjugation of the insurgents, involving the deaths of over one hundred thousand of them.

The growing discontent against the Church is illustrated in history by such early reformers as the Albigenses and the Waldenses

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1) J. Michelet. *Histoire de France*. (Paris 1852 Vol. III. Ch. III. p. 366).

or Vaudois, by the great figure of “il glorioso poverello di Christo” Francis of Assisi, whom as Dante so beautifully and characteristically expresses “married poverty”. In England the shortcomings of the Church were exposed by John Wycliff, who, with incredible courage and amazing industry worked out his plans of ecclesiastical reforms. Before long Wycliff had organised an order of poor preachers, the simple priests, from whom he asked simple piety, a love of the Scriptures and a readiness to preach. Their coarse sermons and long russet dress moved the laughter of the clergy, whose derision was soon to change into alarm, when they saw the number of discontented Lollards (= idle babblers, as they were nicknamed) steadily increase. It is sometimes said that these heretics have been the cause of the degradation of the Church. I believe we had better turn the statement round, and say that the self-degradation of the Church had given its strength to the heretics.

In literature we find the spirit of the times reflected in poets such as Chaucer and Langland. In Langland’s *Vision concerning Piers the Plowman* we hear a man of the people — and this is significant — who raises his voice against the oppression of the poor, who protests against the heavy taxation and severe laws that grind down the peasantry, who deals his blows most violently at the friars, who fights against hypocrisy, condemns the ill-gotten wealth and the persecution of the rich. Attractive though the subject is, we cannot here give an analysis of the poem. Suffice it to say that Langland was keenly alive to the abuses of his times. It is Piers whom the poet makes the mouthpiece of his thoughts, who bids the knight “no more wrest gifts from his tenant nor misdo with the poor”, but he warns the labourer as he warns the knight. The aim of the Ploughman is *to work*, and to make the world work with him; thus the gospel of equality being backed by the gospel of labour. Hunger is God’s instrument in bringing the idlest to toil, and Hunger waits to work her will on the idler and the waster.

✓ The deep undertone of sadness that pervades the whole poem proves that the writer was in dead earnest, that he had personally suffered great hardships; the popularity of the poem (the considerable number of extant manuscripts pointing to this) that the maker had touched on the sore points of the then prevailing social system. The world was hopelessly out of joint, and in his shrewd political and religious common sense Langland suggests *labour* for all parties alike to remedy the evils. But Langland has little or no hope for the future: the dreamer awakes in tears, and in utter despair he remarks that he is looked upon as a lunatic.

Another exponent of the shortcomings of his times is the popular poet Chaucer, though it must be admitted that he looked upon contemporary vices from an altogether different standpoint. Stimulated by a keen and innate talent for sarcasm he could not help satirising social wrongs; he liked to expose them to ridicule, but having done so, he was satisfied. When Chaucer holds up the inimitable picture of the friar (Prologue *Canterbury Tales*) and casually remarks,

"It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce  
For to delen with no swich poraille <sup>1)</sup>  
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille" <sup>2)</sup>

the full import of these words are lost upon those readers who are not aware that the friars had made a vow of poverty, so that instead of shunning the poor, it was their imperative duty to administer to their wants. Langland is more direct in his attacks: for him the matter is far too serious, the naked and terrible truth must be told, there must be no mistake and no misunderstanding. It would fall outside the scope of our subject under discussion to draw a parallel between the two poets, who each in a manner of his own, gives us such a vivid picture of the spirit of the times.

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1) = poor people.

2) Lines 246—248.



That the feeling of discontent was not restricted to a limited number of people only, that the evils and abuses of the times had roused much indignation all over the country, is very strikingly illustrated in a typical form of literature, the popular medieval political poems and songs. It is not for beautiful diction or rhyme that they are to be sought, but rather for the light they throw on the sufferings, the sympathies, the hopes, the fears, and the life of our ancestors in former days; and these must be illustrated from contemporary documents. As such the importance of these songs cannot be underrated; they give expression to the feelings of the people, and may be considered as valuable historical information. The quantity of such productions generally varies with the character of the age: they were frequent in times of oppression and national calamities, thus being a kind of barometer of social and political conditions. Their popularity not only proves that they reflected the sentiments of the people, but also that an ever increasing feeling of independence manifested itself in the lower classes <sup>1</sup>).

Also from a literary standpoint this form of literature is of great importance. A somewhat careful study of these poems and songs will lead to the following conclusion: Many of the medieval political songs form the fundamental basis for the construction of an ideal commonwealth, so that as far as the subject matter is concerned they might have been the forerunners of later Utopian novels. The ruling hobbies of Utopists: equality, levelling of social distinctions, no private property, no tyranny of princes, are all found in these songs. Let us take the Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant, who in his *Martijnzangen* <sup>2</sup>) gives utterance

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1) In *Piers the Plowman* rimes of Robin Hood and Randolph, earl of Chester are mentioned as known to the common men of that day.

2) According to some Martijn is an imaginary character with whom the poet discusses several political and social questions; others are of opinion that Martijn stands for the Bishop of Utrecht, Jan van Nassau.

to his communistic principles. In stanza 37<sup>1)</sup> the poet says that we are all brethren, for we all descend from Adam :

Lieve Jacop, so berecht mi :  
 Of dat volc al comen si  
 Van den eersten Adame.  
 Twi es deen edel, dander vri  
 Die derde eighin man daerbi      eighin = villain  
 Wanen quam dese name ?  
 Twi seghenem ten dorpere : „spi !  
 Ganc wech ! God onnere di !  
 Du best der werelt scame ?”  
 Die edele hevet al tghecri :  
 Men seghet : „willecome ghi !”  
 Dits dies ic mi vergrame,  
 Want het dinct mi ontame.

In stanza 41 it says that tyranny is the cause of all social differences :

Martijn, dat duutsche loy vertelt,  
 Dat van onrechtre ghewelt  
 Eighindoem es comen.  
 Also een prinche wan wijch up tfelt      gained the victory  
 Tfole, datmen te live helt  
 Dat dede hi verdomen  
 Ende vereopen omme ghelt.  
 Dits vole, dat men eighin schelt      called villains  
 Ende men scale hoort nomen.      servant

In stanza 48 the poet tries to show that private property is the root of all evil :

Twee woorde in die werelt sijn  
 Dats allene „mijn” ende „dijn”,  
 Mochtmen die verdriven,  
 Pais ende vrede bleve fijn.  
 Het ware al vri, niemen eighijn  
 Manne metten wiven.

In stanza 49 Maerlant inveighs against greed :

God, diet al bi redene doet,  
 Gaf dat wandel ertsche goet

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1) From : Jacob van Maerlant's *Strophische Gedichten*, door Dr. J. Verdam en Dr. P. Leendertz Jr., A. W. Sijthoff, Leiden 1918.

Der menscheit ghemene,  
 Dattere mede ware ghevoet  
 Ende ghecleet ende ghescoet  
 Ende leven soude rene.  
 Nu es ghiercheit so verwoet,  
 Dat elc settet sinen moet,  
 Omme al te hebbene allene.  
 Hier omme stortmen menschenbloet;  
 Hier omme stichtmen metter spoet  
 Borghe ende hoghe stene  
 Meneghen to wene.

We may add that these songs were extremely popular at the time, so much so that they were translated from Dutch into Latin and French. For England ample material was furnished by Thomas Wright, who compiled from reliable sources a beautiful collection of political songs on the most divergent range of subjects taken from chronicles and memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages under the title of *The Political Songs of England from the reign of John to that of Edward II*<sup>1)</sup> and *Political Poems and Songs from the Accession of Edward III to that of Richard III*<sup>2)</sup> (two volumes). Stores of information are to be gathered from them. The people dare to give utterance to their opinions and intentions, the songs of this period being remarkably bold and pointed.<sup>3)</sup> Space permits only a few specimens. From *The Political Songs of England* I would mention :

*Song of the Husbandman*, p. 149 (in English), written in the reign of Edward I (1272—1307), from which I quote the first stanza typifying the situation and showing how heavily the peasants were taxed.

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1) Printed for the Camden Society, 1839.

2) London, Longman Green, Longman and Roberts, Vol. I. 1859 ; Vol. II. 1861.

3) They are interesting in other points of view, for they illustrate in a very striking manner the history of the language, showing us how Latin, Norman-French and English were the favourite instruments by which the thoughts of the nation were expressed. (Latin for the scholar, Norman-French for the courtier and "good old English" for the lower classes).



Ich herde men upo mold make mucche mon  
 Hou he beth i-tened of here tilyynge,  
 Gode zeres and corn bothe beth a-gon,  
 Ne kepeth here nò sawe nè no song syng,  
 "Now we mote worche, nis ther non other won,  
 Mai ich no lengore lyve with my lesinge;  
 Zet ther is a bitterore bid to the bon,  
 For ever the furthe peni mot to the kyng.

*Translation :* I heard men on the earth make much lamentation — how they are injured in their tillage — good years and corn are both gone — they keep here no saying and sing no song — Now we must work, there is no other custom — I can no longer live with my gleaning — yet there is a bitterer asking for the boon — for ever the fourth penny must (go) to the king.

In another passage the husbandman, after having enumerated his grievances, bitterly complains :

Thus me pileth the pore that is of late pris :  
 Nede in swot and in swynk swynde mot swo.

*Translation :* Thus they rob the poor man, who is of little value — he must needs in sweat and in labour waste away so.

The Song on the Corruptions of the Time (in Latin) is a fair specimen of the unsparing satire which was universally directed against the Romish prelates by their contemporaries. Of the first priest he says (p. 33) :

Presbiter quae mortui quae dant vivi, quaeque  
 Refert ad focariam, cui dat sua seque.

And the lines on princes who inflict taxes on the rustic and the miserable citizen :

Regna movent principes statusque lasivi,  
 Ut ducant exercitus, poenam donativi  
 Infligentes rustico miseroque civi

and the evil consequences of luxury, which Plato and More alike expose in their works :

Sed quid confert miseris luxus aut potestas  
 Qui spretio virtutibus colunt res funestas,  
 Aurum, gemmas, purpuram, et opes congestas ?

and he adds :

Cum labor in dampno est, crescit mortalis egestas.

and again he dwells on the wicked influences of gold, and exhorts people to have a care of the needy, the blind, and the lame.

The Song against the King's Taxes (Norman-French and Latin, p. 182), is interesting, because the poet wants the King to be advised by good counsellors (with which compare remarks of Hythloday on kings in More's *Utopia*).

Rex ut salvetur, falsis maledictis detur !

The poem is also directed against the unconstitutional seizure of wool, and the consequence of it :

1. Unquore plus greve à simple gent collectio lanarum,
2. Que vendre fet communement divitias earum.
3. Ne puet estre que tiel consail constat Deo carum,
4. Issi destrure le poverail pondus per amarum,
5. Non est lex sana, quod regi sit mea lana.

Line 4 expresses the hard fate of the poor, "Thus to destroy the poor people by a bitter burthen", and line 5 an outcry against unjust division : "It is not sound law which gives my wool to the King."

The remark that we ought not to lay such wickedness to the charge of the King, but to the bad counsellor is expressed in :

Homme ne doit à roy retter talem pravitatem  
Mès al maveis consiler per ferocitatem.

Then follows the general complaint that the rich do not pay the taxes ; it is the needy only who give.

Thou who art rich enough, live not thus upon the poor  
Qui satis es dives, non sic ex paupere vives.

The property of the poor taken without their will, is as it were stolen :

Res inopum capta, nisi gratis, est quasi rapta.

And the poet prophesies that when the people are reduced to such a deplorable state, they will no doubt rise in rebellion :

Gentz sunt à tiel meschief quod nequeunt plus dare  
Je ne doute, s'ils eussent chief, quod vollent levare.

Highly suggestive, but for quite a different reason, is the Song (in Latin) against the Scholastic Studies <sup>1)</sup>, which proves that long before the Renaissance had done its wonderful work, people had revolted against the old system of study. Significant are the lines :

Circa dialecticam tempus cur consumis (p. 209)  
Tu qui nullos redditus aliundo sumis ?

*Translation* : Why do you consume your time upon dialectics, thou who receivest no income from other sources ?

From *Political Poems and Songs* (Vol. 4) I mention : On the Rebellion of Jack Straw (p. 224), Song against the Friars (p. 263), On the Corruptions of the Age by John Gower (p. 346). Now what we learn from contemporary literature is that the discontent was general, and that the lower classes began to murmur against the whole system of social inequality, against the tyranny of the nobles and the oppression of the clergy. The distress was faithfully painted by Langland and Chaucer, but no less vividly expressed by John Ball, the mad Priest of Kent. His words characterise the spirit of the times so well that I feel compelled to quote part of his short seditious address to the people. I borrow the passage from Froissart. <sup>2)</sup>

“Bonnes gens, les choses ne peuvent bien aller en Angleterre, ni ne iront jusques à tant que les biens *iront de commun* <sup>3)</sup> et qu’il ne sera ni vilains ni gentils-hommes et que nous ne soyons tous unis. A quoi faire sont ceux que nous nommons seigneurs, plus

1) p. 206.

2) *Les Chroniques de Jean Froissart* par J. A. Buchon, Paris 1824, Tome VIII, livre II. Ch. 106, p. 15.

3) *Italics are mine.*



grands maîtres de nous ? A quoi l'ont-ils desservi (= mérité) ? Pourquoi nous tiennent-ils en servage ? Et si nous venons tous d'un père et de une mère, Adam et Eve, en quoi peuvent-ils dire ni montrer que ils sont mieux seigneurs que nous, fors parceque ils nous font gagner et labourer ce que ils dépendent ? Ils sont vêtus de velour (velours) et de camocas <sup>1)</sup>, fourés de vairs <sup>2)</sup> et de gris <sup>3)</sup> ; et nous sommes vêtus de poures (pauvres) draps. Ils ont les vins, les épices et les bons pains, et nous avons le seigle, le retrait (rebut), la paille et buvons de l'eau. Ils ont le séjour et les beaux manoirs, et nous avons la peine et le travail, la pluie et le vent aux champs ; et faut que de nous vienne et de notre labour ce dont ils tiennent les états."

In a condensed form the levelling doctrine of John Ball was laid down in the popular rime :

"When Adam delved, and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman ?"

For the history of the Utopian novel the period in which Langland and Chaucer composed their masterpieces, in which numerous political songs passed from hand to hand and circulated all over the land, when the smouldering discontent of the labourer came to an outburst in the Peasants' Revolt, when the "crazy priest" spoke his memorable words about common property and levelling of social distinctions, is one of remarkable interest. For it is my firm belief that in the transition-period between Plato and More the latter half of the fourteenth century was the period *par excellence* for the composition of this special form of literature. Facts can only be alleged to confirm this theory. We may call in the aid of history, and pass in review the revolts of the labour classes practically all over Europe, we may refer to literature with its infinite number

1) Etoffe faite de poil de chameau ou de chèvre sauvage.

2) Fourrure de couleur gris-blanc mêlée.

3) = le petit gris.

of political songs, we may quote the sermons of priests — and all of them concur to bear out this statement. It was in the writing of Langland, it was in the preaching of John Ball that the world listened to a declaration of natural equality and the rights of man. Let us all remember the wise lessons given by Piers, the social reformer, to the pilgrims (see Passus VI), and let the student of the subject under discussion read most carefully the fourth Passus for the remarkable political views Langland displays in it. Let him take to heart the wise lessons the poet gives to kings. Let him compare this passage with the corresponding one in Plato's *Republic*, and let him judge for himself whether there is not a certain analogy between the two. Like Plato, Langland gives us a picture of a good monarch; he is convinced that a king will then rule in the affection of the people, when he has Reason for his Chancellor, and Conscience for his Justiciary. These passages as so many others, in which the discontent about social evils are faithfully reflected, are of the utmost importance for our present researches, for they contain the germ, the nucleus of the Utopian novel. In a time of dreadful confusion such as could only issue in a frightful civil war, a war of adverse classes which had lost all sense of a common country, or only regarded it as fair spoil for the strongest, we find medieval social reformers preach their doctrines about equality and a just division of labour. We hear them disclaim against the tyranny of princes, against the greed of the rich; we hear them raise their voices against the vices of the clergy, the corruptions of the time. We are not making too bold an assertion that in thoughts and ideas, in their withering criticism on the times, in their suggestions for improvement, they may justly be called the forerunners of the Utopists. In what the latter essentially differed from medieval writers is the form in which they couched their ideas. In medieval literature we are looking in vain for the typical framework that distinguishes the Utopian novel from any other

literary product. The question arises how it is that it never occurred to any medieval writer to express his ideas about social and political reforms in a more attractive form, that he never thought of working out his ideas thoroughly, that he could not be tempted to go a step further and describe to the people how different the world would be, if his doctrines of social equality and of common property should form the fundamental basis for a new system of government. As it is, medieval writers content themselves with expressing their feeling of dissatisfaction, exposing the vices and shortcomings of the times and suggesting means for improvement of the situation, but they go no further than that : here they have come to a dead halt. They lack the faculty of creating anything new. The Middle Ages — the Dead Ages as they are sometimes called for more than one reason — show a remarkable dearth of fresh and new ideas ; this period was not calculated to stir people's imagination. The work of the reformers, far from showing much originality rather preserve a uniformity of character, and offer little variety of conception. With the rich and varied material he had at his disposal, no writer ever thought of describing an imaginary State with the ideal conditions already suggested by him in another form. It seemed as if he could not break the fetters of medieval orthodoxy, as if he could not soar above the narrow bounds of medievalism. And yet nobody can maintain that the medieval reformers lacked the right intuition or that they did not clearly tell us "where the shoe pinched" ; but they lacked the tremendous and powerful aid of that movement which was to make its influence felt in practically all departments of art and science, an influence the extent of which it is impossible to gauge : the Renaissance. Together with many other blessings it opened people's eyes to the beauties of the classics, notably of Greek, and it was the Greeks, more especially the great classical philosopher Plato, that was to give the inspiration, the impulse to the social reformers of the Middle Ages. It was Plato who had



to suggest to them the form in which to couch their ideas. If medieval writers had been acquainted with his literary products, they would no doubt have been fascinated by his great thoughts. In his works, and more especially in his *Republic* they would have found the food which was required to nourish their spirits. If once they had perused the *Republic* with its remarkable and novel description of an ideal commonwealth, they would have eagerly and thankfully accepted the hint. Working upon the plan their predecessor had so ingeniously devised, they would have adapted his thoughts to contemporary conditions, and would perhaps have given us a sketch of a perfect State, in which all the defects of reality were done away with; thus more or less forcing their reader into considering the evils that afflicted contemporary society, and the means by which they might be remedied. However, Greek was practically unknown in the Middle Ages. It is not mentioned among the subjects and the courses of medieval academic study. Latin was known, it is true, especially for theological purposes, but the Humanities as such were utterly neglected, and Greek had become in the fullest sense of the word a dead language. In Scotland the state of things was even worse than in many other countries: at the time when Grocyn and Linacre brought Greek to Oxford, and when Colet opened his famous public school where one hundred and fifty-three boys were to be taught both Greek and Latin, Scotland was debarred from the advantages of a classical education. James Melville testifies that in 1571 neither Greek nor Hebrew was "to be gottine in the land." At length, in 1620, a chair of Humanity was endowed in St. Leonard's College, but there was no professor of Greek in St. Andrews until 1695.<sup>1)</sup> Eduard Norden, the great classical authority speaks in his work *Die Antike Kunstprosa vom VI Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance* about "die im Occident sonst fast

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1) *Cambridge History*, Vol. II. p. 370.

verlorene Kenntniss des Griechischen" (p. 666) ; but as a conscientious scholar he adds in a note on the same page, "Aber das zu verarbeitende Material ist so ungeheuer gross und z. T. auf Gebieten verstreut, die meinen Studien und Interessen fern liegen, dass ich zu seiner völligen Sammlung und Verarbeitung noch Jahre gebrauchen werde."

In my researches I have not met with contradictory statements, it being on all hands conceded that Greek was practically unknown, and if it was studied at all, it was not the works of Plato that came in for a share of the student's interest.<sup>1)</sup> Let us consider it a wise act of Providence that the medieval reformers lacked the knowledge of Greek, for even if they had had the courage of exposing the evils of the times, dreaming of remodelling society by holding up a picture of an ideal State with great toleration and no social distinctions, their efforts would have been defeated by the unrelenting hostility of the Church and by the incapacity of their contemporaries to understand their aims. Rendered impotent for salutary action by ignorance, by terror, by uneasy dread of the doom declared for heretics and rebels, their fellowmen would not have been able to grasp their enlightened ideas, but would rather have laughed them to scorn and have sent their writer to a madhouse.

The enlightened ideas were to come to mankind through the Renaissance. The blessings of this movement were manifold, both the intellect and the imagination were roused and stimulated as they had never been before and have never been since. The people of the Middle Ages who, it seemed, had lived in a state of inactivity, whose powers seemed to have been dormant, shook off their fetters and emancipated themselves from the narrow bounds of scholasticism. New ideas and new thoughts crowded upon people's minds : the old things passed away, and all things became new. The

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1) See also *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, articles on *Classics* p. 450, and *Scholasticism*, p. 348.

Renaissance; the great Liberator, had begun its wonderful work of emancipation and was making its influence felt in practically all departments of art and science. The lack of printed books in the first period of the Revival, and the rarity of Greek erudition among the students, combined with the intense enthusiasm aroused for the new gospel of the classics, gave special value to the personal teaching of professors who, attracted by promises of high pay, journeyed from city to city to reveal to their fellowmen the glories of classic art and letters. Indissolubly connected with this movement are the names of great men such as Erasmus, Colet, Grocyn, Linacre and More. Imbued with a sincere love of the classics, they did whatever they could to spread their knowledge of ancient writers, and this profound love is perhaps best exemplified in the brilliant Dutch humanist Erasmus, who remarks, "I have given up my whole soul to Greek learning, and as soon as I get any money, I shall buy Greek books — and then I shall buy some clothes." For a time he lectured on Greek in Cambridge. Linacre, who had studied in Florence under the learned Greek Demetrius Chalcondylas, taught at Oxford, where Thomas More became one of his most distinguished pupils. Grocyn, who was the first Englishman to teach Greek publicly at Oxford, included among his friends Erasmus and More. Colet, whose lectures on theology were thronged by Oxford scholars, and who, by his interpretation of the Scriptures, had startled the world by the novelties of his ideas, gave a tremendous impetus to the study of Latin and Greek by the foundation of his own Grammar School which was to displace the medieval system of instruction, and for which he had set apart a large portion of his private fortune. In how far Thomas More was inspired and influenced by a love of the classics, will be discussed in due course. Enough to show that these men were all enthusiastic students of the literature of Ancient Greece and Rome, and that they, in their turn, had a large and active share in spreading this knowledge among their con-



temporaries.<sup>1)</sup> Their work was highly facilitated, when the art of printing had been invented, which invention did much to make letters the common property of all. Thus it was that people became acquainted with the poetry of Homer, the drama of Sophocles, the philosophy of Plato. The period of the Renaissance is of engrossing interest to the student in all departments of life: in religion and in art, in letters and in natural science, in politics and in ethics. It would of course be impossible to give in a small compass even a sketch of the extent of this new birth. But in connection with the subject under discussion I would point out that the Renaissance not only means a return to the antique; for the revived interest in Greek and Roman literature, and in the antiquities in general, though of extreme importance, is only a feature of it: the revival of antique learning was a phenomenon or symptom of a far wider and more comprehensive alteration in the condition of the European race. The movement, which stirred the minds of men into activity, which inspired them with a craving for knowledge, made them eager to learn more of things at home and of the new lands which were being disclosed by the enterprise of daring explorers and navigators.

Copernicus had revealed the mysteries of the universe; enterprising and bold seafarers had traversed unknown seas. This exploratory spirit shows another, no less interesting feature of the Renaissance and may, in its striving after independent inquiry and judgment, be regarded as one of the manifestations of the new movement. The voyages of Columbus and Vespucci to America, the rounding of the Cape by Diaz, and the discovery of the Searoad to India by Vasco da Gama marked a new era for the human race,

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1) The movement also had its dark side. How, for instance, it stirred the lower passions in man. In this connection I would draw attention to Italian society, which exhibited a spectacle of literary and artistic refinement crossed by brutalities of lust, treasons, poisonings or violence.


and inaugurated the modern age more decisively than any other series of events had done. Spain and Portugal took the lead, Holland and England were soon to follow. Seamen were leaving their ports to penetrate the mysteries of the unknown world and came home with the most miraculous stories about wonderful countries, startling their friends at home with fantastic and incredible tales of adventure. Such was the spirit of the times when More composed his *Utopia*. How these influences affected his work, we shall have to inquire in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RENAISSANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THOMAS MORE.

The moment has now come to discuss the question : under what influences did More compose his *Utopia*, what circumstances finally led to the creation of a work that stands out unique in the domain of letters ? This question is not so very easily settled. Literary problems cannot be viewed from a mathematical standpoint ; we cannot assign concrete values to each of the elements constituting the whole. More's *Utopia* is a blending of classical and modern ideas and the component parts are often so indissolubly and intimately connected that it is very hard, in some cases even impossible, to separate them. This consideration was evidently lost upon such a critic as De Gibbins, who, I am afraid, has somewhat underrated the importance of the task he has voluntarily laid upon himself, when he says in his *English Social Reformers*, "More's *Utopia* is a Christian version of Plato's *Republic*, adopted to the new social order." If I could have shared the opinion of this gentleman, it would no doubt have simplified matters. Unfortunately I could not. I am the first to admit that More borrowed important features for his sketch from Plato's *Republic*, but the work, which was planned and carried out with great consistency and ingenuity, was typically More's own. Plato's *Republic* has no more developed into More's *Utopia* — for that is what De Gibbins's statement comes to — than the English language, under the influence of Norman-French developed into modern French. If De Gibbins had taken the trouble to consult any biography of More, he would, to say the least of it, have modified his statement. We cannot pass any fair judgment on More's work,





unless we know the man. Let us bear this in mind. In his *Lives of the Chancellors of England*, Lord Campbell says of him that his character both in public and private life comes as near to perfection as our nature will permit, and the cynic Dean Swift places him with Junius and Marcus Brutus, Socrates, Epaminondas and the younger Cato, as the solitary modern, "a sextumvirate to which all the ages of the world cannot add a seventh." <sup>1)</sup> More was indeed a man of high moral principles. Of acute sensibility, most sympathetic, and of infinite benevolence, he was eminently a philanthropist. The common welfare was his business, and singularly regardless of his own interest or his own preferment he sought to interfere for good, wherever and whenever he had an opportunity to do so. His scrupulous impartiality, his integrity and his incorruption, when corruption was universal, have been admitted even by his enemies. "If", he once said to one of his sons-in-law, who had, on the grounds of kinship expected to be favoured, "my father, whom I dearly love, were on one side and the devil whom I sincerely hate, were on the other, the devil should have his rights." <sup>2)</sup> On the strength of this knowledge I am convinced that the primary impulse which induced More to write his *Utopia* was his keen sensibility of the conflict between the ideals he fostered in his own breast and the harsh realities of life. True, the assiduous study of the ancient writers, and the intercourse with such men as Colet and Erasmus had a marked influence on his work, but if More had not been keenly alive to the abuses of the times, the *Utopia* would never have been written. When due attention is paid to his character, we arrive at the conclusion that More was impelled to expose the evils and vices of his time and that he was impelled to suggest means by which they might be remedied. We may in full confidence accept that he would

1) See More's *Utopia* with an introduction by John O'Hagan (Everyman's Library) pp. VII and VIII.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Introduction, p. XXIII.

have written a work on social reforms, independent of the influences of the Renaissance. Erasmus said at the time that More intended to point out where and from what causes the European Commonwealths and more especially the English, with which More was most familiar, were at fault.<sup>1)</sup> Like John Ball before him he would have raised his voice against the glaring injustice of social and political relations. He would no doubt have done the work quite differently, for we can hardly imagine More in the character of a seditious writer, but More's name would certainly have come down to us as a social reformer. He would surely have composed a work containing an *exposé* of the evils and miseries then prevalent in England and in Europe in general, with an analysis of their causes and suggestions for their remedies, a work which, I imagine, would in style and sentiment come very near the first Book of his *Utopia*. That the world's literature can boast of a work such as we know it now, is due to the influence of the Renaissance. In the preceding chapter we have seen that this movement stirred the minds of men into activity and inspired them with a craving for knowledge. We have spoken of the great astronomical researches of Copernicus and about the geographical discoveries associated with the names of Dias, Cabot, Columbus, and Vespucci. The spirit of discovery made its influence felt in literature; what had been achieved was being recorded or made known by rumours, and accounts of the bold work of navigators made a profound impression upon thinking men at home. In the records of these achievements no name stands higher than that of Amerigo Vespucci, the bold Florentine navigator and the discoverer of the New World. An account of his discoveries was given in his *Quatuor Navigationes*, a valuable treatise and a remarkable contribution to the literature of maritime discovery. As I see in these *Navigationes* a direct source from which More took particulars for the construction of his *Utopia*,

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1) Erasmus to Hutten, Epist. CCCCXIVII.

more than passing attention will be given to this work. The *Quatuor Navigationes*, that is his first four voyages to the New World, are described by Vespucci himself as having taken place in 1497-98, 1499-1500, 1501 and 1503-04; the first two in the Spanish service, the other two in that of the King of Portugal. His experiences and adventures he laid down in his *Lettera*, which, though written in rude and ungrammatical language, and jargonised by the admixture of Spanish or Portuguese words and idioms, is of great interest to students of geography and anthropology. Recent researches have shown conclusively that the *Lettera* was printed at Florence in 1505, and that a Latin translation of it appeared in 1507. Now this Latin version was eagerly read and became extremely popular, whereas the original Italian text seems to have dropped out of sight from the time of its appearance down to the middle of the 18th century, when Bandini met with a single copy. Even now only five copies are recorded, one of which is in the British Museum.<sup>1)</sup> It may seem somewhat strange that the Latin text should have come down to us through French, but it happened like this. An Italian conveyed a copy of Vespucci's *Epistola* to his friends, members of the St. Dié gymnasium in the Vosges, men who were busy in reviving the scientific literature of the ancients. One of these members translated it or got it translated into French, and from the French version a Latin translation was made by Basin. This idea of translating an Italian text into Latin, the great popularity of and predilection for a translated Latin text over the original Italian is in itself an outcome of the humanistic movement: the love of the classics. Thus Vespucci's account was made known to the world through a Latin translation, while the original passed completely into oblivion. Numerous reprints followed in quick succession which circulated so widely and became so well known

1) See preface of *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle isole nuovamente trovati in quattro nuovi viaggi*; London, Bernard Quaritch, 1893.



that the fame of Vespucci began to overshadow that of Columbus.

With Churton Collins <sup>1)</sup> I agree that it is on the account of the Fourth Voyage that More founded his fable. As the passage to which More refers in the first book of his *Utopia* is of the utmost importance, from its bearing on More's conception, it may be worth while to enlarge on it. In the Fourth Voyage we are told that on the 10th of May Amerigo Vespucci started from Lisbon. He was captain of one of the six ships that were under the command of a very obstinate admiral who wanted to explore Sierra Leone. Their ships sailed S. W. and after many adventures they sighted an island which they called "Bad Island", and which has been identified with Fernando Noronha. Here the Admiral's ship struck upon a rock, and when the ships came near to save the crew if possible, the commander ordered Vespucci to make for the island and seek a good anchorage for the ships. Amerigo, having to follow up this command, detached himself from the rest, but was later on joined by another vessel. It is not true, as commentators say, that Vespucci and his colleague wished to stay there and go in quest of further adventures. Vespucci states very clearly that they would fain have returned to their native country, but that they were not allowed to do so, for there was an ordinance of the King "which commanded them that whichever of the ships should lose sight of the fleet or of its chief, should make for the land that they had discovered in the previous voyage." <sup>2)</sup> Accordingly they went to the harbour to which they had given the name of *Bahia de todos os Santos*, where they waited two months and four days, hoping to receive news from the other ships. The two captains then resolved to explore the land. They sailed two hundred and sixty leagues further on, till they arrived in a harbour, which could be no other than that of Cape Frio. Here they decided to construct a fort and

1) In his edition of Thomas More's *Utopia*. (Introduction, p. XXXVIII).

2) *Lettera*. Fourth Voyage, p. 43.

left in it twenty-four Christians all from the flagship that had been lost. These men they provided with victuals for six months and twelve big guns and many other arms. This done, Amerigo and his companions determined to return to Portugal, where they arrived on the 18th of June, 1504.

This passage must have appealed very strongly to the vivid imagination of More, for it is especially on this incident that he developed the framework of his romance. It is Hythloday, the mysterious sailor, to whom More is introduced during his stay at Antwerp who is one of the twenty-four sailors left behind by Amerigo Vespucci in the garrison, and where the real account ends, More takes it up, continues it and works it out at pleasure. I may add that before departing, Vespucci and his companions pacified all the land's people and that he and his men went forty leagues inland, after having ascertained that the natives were of a friendly disposition. Of this suggestive hint in Vespucci's report More evidently avails himself, judging from the account Hythloday gives to his friends. For he tells them that he dwelt amongst the natives as friends and that it had not been difficult for him to win the love and favour of the people of that country. Like Vespucci, who went forty leagues inward, Hythloday explored the country, and on one of these expeditions he had "after manye dayes iourneis found townys and cytyes, and weale publyques full of people, governed by good and holsom lawes." <sup>1)</sup> I have practically quoted the whole passage of the Fourth Voyage to show what in More's work is fact, what fantasy. The episode of Hythloday and his companions being left behind corresponds to that of the twenty-four Christians stationed in the garrison, but there is in Vespucci's account no allusion to the discovery of any towns or cities governed by good and wholesome laws. Nor have I been able to find any foundation of truth in the miraculous escape of Hythloday and his subsequent

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 5.

safe arrival in his native country. Hythloday at last "by marvelous chaunce arryved in Taprobane <sup>1)</sup>, from whens he wente to Calyquit <sup>2)</sup>, where he chaunced to fynde certeyne of hys contrey shyppes, wherin he retorned again into hys countreye nothyng lesse then lokyd for." <sup>3)</sup> This is in glaring contrast with historical facts, for Vespucci winds up his account by remarking that he was received very well and "beyond all belief, because all the city had given him up as lost, since the other ships of the fleet had all been wrecked through the arrogance and folly of our Admiral." <sup>4)</sup>

I believe that the influence of Vespucci's account on More's *Utopia* has been underrated; it is greater than is generally admitted. For a fair judgment we have to place ourselves on a contemporary standpoint, a task by no means easy, but of imperative necessity for an impartial study of facts. We know that More had eagerly perused the *Quatuor Navigationes* and that he had been fascinated by the vivid description of unknown tribes and their singular manners and customs. It is not exactly known when More read it first, but as the Latin translation became extremely popular shortly after 1507, he must have got acquainted with it at a time when he was seriously considering the publication of a work that was to show the world "where and from what causes the European commonwealths were at fault". More understood the world, the spirit of the times too well not to be fully aware of the peril he incurred by the publication of such a work. Hard truths would have to be told in it; high dignitaries of State and Church would have to be exposed, and its author would have to show to them that the polity then followed was certainly not conducive to the welfare of the people. More rightly anticipated that the lessons he intended to teach them, would not be received in a friendly spirit. This he had experienced when, impelled by a strong sense of justice;

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1) Ceylon. 2) Calicut. 3) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 4.

4) *Quatuor Navigationes*, p. 45.



he had imperilled his personal liberty by opposing an unconstitutional and exorbitant demand on the part of the King's minister. This happened in the spring of 1504, when More, in his twentysixth year, had just been returned to Parliament. "God was with you", said Dudley, "that you confessed no fault against the King, had you done so, you would have paid the penalty with your head." <sup>1)</sup> At the time the event had made a deep impression upon his mind, and More had not forgotten the cruel lesson when he was considering the groundplan for his work. He realised that it would hardly be possible to give a purely historical and scientific survey of the corruptions and evils of the times with the personal suggestions how to remedy them. The naked truth could not be told. The author of such a work might be asked all sorts of troublesome questions and find it extremely awkward to answer them in a satisfactory manner. Therefore More was looking for a literary form which would enable him to give free expression to his thoughts and feelings, without, however, exposing himself to any disagreeable consequences. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance for the writer that his work should bear a fictitious character, and that it might be looked upon as a fantastical and ingenious fable. It was then that More, through a Latin translation, got acquainted with Amerigo Vespucci's *Quatuor Navigationes*, and I can understand that under the circumstances this work was a kind of revelation to him. From a constructive point of view it suggested to him the unique idea of connecting Hythloday with Vespucci, by which he excited the curiosity of his readers, when stories about the sea were eagerly devoured. But at the same time there was a loophole for escape, in case troublesome questions should be asked, by alleging that Hythloday was meant as a mere parody and satire on sailors, who, by their fantastic and absurd stories about imaginary countries were misleading their countrymen. Considering Hythloday in this light, I am inclined

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1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Introduction, p. XI.

to compare him with another inimitable character in English literature: Lemuel Gulliver. Both are fictitious sailors who visit unknown parts with a view to exposing social and political abuses. Both writers paint their characters with remarkable realism, thus showing themselves masters in the art of feigning. However, here the parallel ceases, for in other respects More and Swift are diametrically opposed, because they look on the problem from opposite points of view. More is pre-eminently a philanthropist, and his work is more or less an outcome of it, Swift on the other hand is the cynical misanthrope who takes an almost fiendish delight in giving vent to feelings of bitter enmity against the human race.

The influence of Vespucci's account was not only confined to the framework of the *Utopia*. The work of the Florentine also provided him with valuable data for the subject matter of his romance. It is especially the First Voyage that contains many interesting suggestions. For a clear understanding of this statement and for a proper appreciation of this influence I shall quote the more significant passages in it. Amerigo tells us that he met people who have neither king nor lord, but who "live in their own liberty, that they have no judicial system, but marvellously<sup>1)</sup> or never did we see any dispute among them . . .<sup>2)</sup>. They are people of neat exterior and clean of body, because of so continually washing themselves as they do . . .<sup>3)</sup>. They have no private property, but their dwellings are in common, and every eight or ten years they change their place of habitation . . .<sup>4)</sup>. They despise precious metals . . . The wealth that we enjoy in Europe and elsewhere, such as gold, jewels, pearls, and other riches, they hold as nothing, and although they have them in their own lands, they do not labour to obtain them, nor do they value

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1) Seldom.

2) Amerigo Vespucci's *Quatuor Navigationes*, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1893, p. 9. 3) Ibid. p. 9. 4) Ibid. p. 11.

them... They are liberal in giving, for it is rarely they deny you anything; and on the other hand, free in asking, when they shew themselves your friends.”<sup>1)</sup> It is a great pity that Vespucci has not given us more and fuller particulars about the countries he has visited and that he has not worked out his statements more systematically and elaborately. The writer seems to have felt this himself; at least he is constantly referring to a journal, called by him *Le Quattro Giornate*, in which he intends to comprise everything in detail. From the nature of his references to it, that journal must have been a much ampler and more exact record of his wanderings than we possess otherwise; it was apparently illustrated with charts and drawings. Let us express the hope here that this manuscript may still be found in some Italian or Spanish hiding-place.

In spite of the scanty information Vespucci gives us in his *Quatuor Navigationes*, we are entitled to draw certain important conclusions. What strikes us is that the communism in More's Utopia is very much the same as that of the tribes Vespucci met on his voyages. Like the natives, all Utopians are equal and there is no division into different classes. It is most remarkable, however, that the curious custom prevalent among the tribes of removing every eight or ten years, is found again in More's romance, for the Utopians likewise “change their houses by lotte every ten years.”<sup>2)</sup> I emphasise this analogy as something very interesting: in Plato's work this change is not spoken of, and as this peculiar custom is mentioned in the *Quatuor Navigationes*, I think it very likely that More borrowed his idea directly from Vespucci's account.

Again I consider that Vespucci's remark about the natives who have no laws and yet “have hardly any dispute among them”, must have impressed More strongly at a time, when England in the reign of Henry VIII was practically flooded with new acts, and

1) Amerigo Vespucci's *Quatuor Navigationes*, London, Bernard Quaritch, 1893, p. 11.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. II. p. 55.



it is not impossible that More was thinking of this passage, when he commented on the fewness of the laws in *Utopia* (see Bk. II. Ch. VII.) When More describes the contempt of gold and silver <sup>1)</sup>, reference is made by editors to analogous passages in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. This is perfectly correct, but I would in this place stress the fact that the contempt of gold and precious metals in general is also shown by the tribes described in the *Quatuor Navigationes*. We should, therefore, not be too positive in asserting that More derived this idea from classical sources only.

I thought it incumbent on me to draw special attention to Vespucci's work, because, on the strength of the information given above, we may conclude:

- I. that the foundation and arrangement of the plot is based on the travels of Amerigo Vespucci, whom Raphael Hythloday had accompanied on his voyages, and ✓
- II. that these travels (especially the first) contain valuable hints from which More borrowed some of his accessories for the modelling of his fiction. ✓

We shall now have to discuss the influence of the Renaissance in a more limited sense and inquire in what respect and to what extent More owes a debt to the classics. I approach this subject with some diffidence. In the second chapter (on Plato) I spoke of the divergent opinions as to More's indebtedness to classical sources and quoted the verdict of De Gibbins, who called the *Utopia* a modernised *Republic*, with which I contrasted the reserved opinion of the *Cambridge History*, which remarks, "It may have been suggested by Plato's *Republic*, but the books have little in common." <sup>2)</sup> More's *Utopia* has had its proper share of attention, it has never been looked upon as a "quantité négligeable" in literature;

Plato and  
More.

*General  
Latin  
- to be  
- to be diff.*

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VI. p. 76.

2) *Cambridge History*, Vol. III. p. 18.

editors have not failed in their exertions to elucidate intricate passages, but the question, if and to what degree More was influenced by the classics in the composition of his work, has not received the consideration which may reasonably be expected. And yet the problem deserves a fair treatment.

From the very outset I would observe that there is a great difference between analogy and influence. Annotators have been scrupulously accurate in making special notes whenever Plato's name occurs in the *Utopia*, but the mere mention of Plato as such proves nothing. We shall have to inquire in what connection, for what reason Plato's name is introduced in the *Utopia*. To give a concrete example. When More exposes the monarchs of his time, and refers to Plato who holds the same views on the subject, it does not signify that More's critique on the bad rule of monarchs had been inspired by the ancient philosopher. Here is evidently a case of analogy, and More would no doubt have expressed his unfavourable opinion about the shortcomings of monarchs, if he had not been familiar with the classical source at all.

✓ The frequent allusions and references to Plato's *Republic* not only prove that More was thoroughly familiar with this work, but also that the *Republic* must be regarded as the most important of More's models. From it he borrowed the idea of a pattern commonwealth based on communistic principles. From a constructive point of view the classical influence is therefore undeniable. We shall not talk here about the division of the *Republic* into books, which is, like all similar divisions, probably later than the age of Plato. For us, who want to draw a parallel between the two works, it is of more importance that the *Republic* may be divided into two parts: the first (Books I-III) containing the description of a State framed generally in accordance with Hellenic notions of religion and morality, while in the second (Books V-X) the Hellenic State is transformed into an ideal kingdom of philosophy of which all

other governments are the perversions. More follows exactly the same method in his *Utopia*: Book I being devoted to a general description of Europe (and of England in particular) with its social and political misrule and moral depravity, and Book II containing a picture of an ideal State with good laws and perfect rulers. This influence should not be underrated. It is highly doubtful, if More had ever thought of couching his ideas in the form of an ideal commonwealth, if this wonderful and unique thought had not been suggested to him by Plato.

No wonder that the classical work strongly appealed to More: between him and his predecessor there were many ties of affinity. Both were disgusted at the way in which the affairs of the world were conducted. Plato saw about him a degenerated Greece, More a corrupted England; both were shocked at the injustice and misrule of princes, at the bad education of the people, at the wickedness and depravity of mankind in general. Is it therefore surprising that More should frequently refer to the passages in the *Republic* and express his warm sympathy with the ideas developed in them? I have collected these passages to show what kindred spirit tied the classic and the modern writer.

The works consulted are the *Utopia* edited by Lupton (Clarendon Press, 1895) and the *Republic* in the translation by Jowett (Clarendon Press, 1894). References are to the pages.

### *Utopia.*

#### About kings.

Bk. I. pp. 79 and 80.

Si quidem cum tuus censeat Plato, respublicas ita demum futuras esse felices, si aut regnent philosophi, aut reges philosophentur; quamproculaberit felicitas, si philosophi regibus nec dignentur saltem suam impartiri consilium?

1) Greek text from Burnet's edition (Clarendon Press), which, in these passages, is identical with the text of Stallbaum, translated by Jowett.

### *Republic* 1).

Bk. V. p. 473.

Ἐὰν μὴ, ἣν δ' ἐγώ, ἣ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλεῖς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ἱκανῶς, καὶ τοῦτο εἰς ταῦτόν συμπέσῃ, δύναμὶς τε πολιτικῇ καὶ



φιλοσοφία, τῶν δὲ νῦν πορευομένων  
χωρὶς ἐφ' ἑκάτερον αἱ πολλαὶ φύσεις  
ἐς ἀνάγκης ἀποκλεισθῶσιν, οὐκ ἔστι  
κακῶν παῦλα, (ὃ φίλε Γλαύκων),  
ταῖς πόλεσιν, δοκῶ δ' οὐδὲ τῷ ἀν-  
θρωπίνῳ γένει, οὐδὲ αὕτῃ ἡ πολιτεία  
μὴ ποτε πρότερον φνῆ τε εἰς τὸ  
δυνατὸν καὶ φῶς ἡλίου ἴδῃ, ἣν νῦν  
λόγῳ διεληλύθαμεν,...

Translation. For where as your  
Plato judgethe that weale publyques  
shall by this meanes attayne perfecte  
felicities, other if phylosophers be kynges,  
or els if kynges give themselves to the  
study of Philosophie; how farre I  
praye yowe, shall comen wealthes  
then be from thys felicitie, if phylosophers  
wyll vouchsafe to instructe kynges with  
their good counsell?

Translation. Until philosophers are  
kings, or the kings and princes of this  
world have the spirit and power of  
philosophy and political greatness and  
wisdom meet in one, and those com-  
moner natures who pursue either to  
the exclusion of the other are compelled  
to stand aside, cities will never have  
rest from their evils — no, nor the  
human race, as I believe — and then  
only will this our State have a possibility  
of life and behold the light of day.

Significant is More's expression "tuus" Plato. The use of the possessive pronoun implies: Plato, with whom we have become quite familiar. More is not only impressed by this world-famous passage, but he enters quite into the spirit of Plato, when he makes Hythloday say, "Sed bene haud dubie praevidit Plato, nisi reges philosophentur ipsi, nunquam futurum ut perversis opinionibus a pueris imbuti atque infecti penitus philosophantium comprobent consilia: quod ipse quoque experiebatur apud Dionysium."<sup>1</sup>) More bitterly hints here at Plato's sad experiences with kings, at the same time showing the world that conditions have not improved at all, when he continues in a sombre mood, now referring to contemporary circumstances, "An non me putas, si apud aliquem regem decreta sana proponerem, et pernicioosa malorum semina conarer illi evellere, protinus aut eiciendum aut habendum ludibrio?"<sup>2</sup>)

1) p. 80. 2) With which compare the verdict on John Ball, who, on account of his advanced ideas, was nicknamed "the mad priest of Kent." (see Chapter III, p. 44).

After having referred to the monarchs of his time (Lewis XII of France, Ferdinand of Aragon, Henry VIII of England), who, by their deeds clearly show how monarchs ought not to rule, More proceeds to teach kings how they should acquit themselves of their sacred task.

### About the duties of kings.

Bk. I. p. 93.

Eq̄ue magis ad principem eam pertinere curam, ut populo bene sit suo, quam ut sibi; non aliter ac pastoris officium est oves potius quam semet pascere.

Translation. *That therefore the kyng ought to take more care for the wealth of his people, then for his owne wealth even as the office and dewtie of a shepherde is, in that he is a shepherd, to feede his shepe rather then hymself.*

Bk. I. p. 343.

Οτι οἶει τοὺς ποιμένας ἢ τοὺς βουκόλους τὸ τῶν προβάτων ἢ τῶν βοῶν ἀγαθὸν σκοπεῖν καὶ παχύνειν αὐτοὺς καὶ θεραπεύειν πρὸς ἄλλο τι βλέποντας ἢ τὸ τῶν δεσποτῶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ αὐτῶν, καὶ δὴ καὶ τοὺς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἄρχοντας, οἳ ὥς ἀληθῶς ἄρχουσιν, ἄλλως πως ἡγῆ ἢ διανοεῖσθαι πρὸς τοὺς ἀρχομένους ἢ ὥσπερ ἂν τις πρὸς πρόβατα διατεθείη, καὶ ἄλλο τι σκοπεῖν αὐτοὺς διὰ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἢ τοῦτο, ὅθεν αὐτοὶ ὠφελήσονται.

Translation. *Because you fancy that the shepherd or neatherd fattens or tends the sheep or oxen with a view to their own good, and not to the good of himself or his master; and you further imagine that the rulers of States if they are true rulers, never think of their subjects, as sheep, and that they are not studying their own advantage day and night.*

The allusion to the shepherd and his flock is striking, but I would venture to remark that a similar passage occurs in the Bible. (See Ezekiel XXXIV. 2: "Thus saith the Lord God: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?" So that it is not impossible that More, with his profound knowledge of the Scriptures was inspired by this passage.

Why philosophers refrain from meddling in the affairs of state.

Here More so absolutely and perfectly agrees with Plato that he quotes, with some slight variations, what the classic has to say on the same subject.

Bk. I. p. 104.

Quam ob rem pulcherrima similitudine declarat Plato, cur merito sapientes abstineant a capessenda Republica. Quippe quum populum videant in plateaseffusum assiduis imbribus perfundi, nec persuadere queant illis ut se subducant pluviae, tectaque subeant; gnari nihil profuturos sese si exeant, quam ut una compluantur, semet intra tecta continent; habentes satis, quando alienae stultitiae non possunt mederi, si ipsi saltem sint in tuto.

Translation. *Wherefore Plato by a goodly similitude declareth whie wise men refrefyn to medle in the common wealith. For when they see the people swarm in to the stretes, and dailie wett to the skin wyth rayne, and yet can not persuade them to goo owt of the rayne, and to take their houses; knowynge well that if they shoulde goo owte to them, they shoulde nothyng prevayle, nor wynne ought by it, but be wett also in the rain; they do kepe them selves within their houses; beyng content that they be saffe themselves, seyng they can not remedye the follye of the people.*

Compare what Plato says about the guardians who may not have private property and who take their meals jointly with what More has to tell us on the same subject.

Bk. II. Ch. II. p. 130.

Quin bifores quoque facili tractu manus apertiles, ac dein sua sponte coeuntes,

Bk. VI, p. 496.

οἷον ἐν χειμῶνι κονιορτοῦ καὶ ζάλης ὑπὸ πνεύματος φερομένου ὑπὸ τειχίον ἀποστίας, ὁρῶν τοὺς ἄλλους καταπιμπλαμένους ἀνομίας, ἀγαπᾷ εἴ πῃ αὐτὸς καθαρὸς ἀδικίας τε καὶ ἀνοσίων ἔργων τὸν τε ἐνθάδε βίον βιώσεται καὶ τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν αὐτοῦ μετὰ καλῆς ἐλπίδος ἴλεως τε καὶ εὐμενῆς ἀπαλλάσσεται.

Translation. *He is like one who, in the storm of dust and sleet which the driving wind hurries along, retires under the shelter of a wall, and seeing the rest of mankind full of wickedness, he is content, if only he can live his own life and be pure from evil or unrighteousness, and depart in peace and good-will, with bright hopes.*

Bk. II, p. 416.

πρῶτον μὲν οὐσίαν κεκτημένον μηδεμίαν ἰδίαν, ἃν μὴ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη



quemuis intromittunt, ita nihil usquam privati est. Nam domos ipsas uno quoque decennio sorte commutant.

Translation. *Thyes doores he made with two leaves, never locked nor bolted, so easye to be opened that they wil followe the least drawing of a synger and shutte agayne by themselves. Everye man that wyll, maye goo yn, for there is nothyng wythin the howses that ys pryvate, or annye mannes owne. And everye ten yeare they chaunge their howses by lotte.*

I have pointed out that the passage in the *Utopia* bears a close resemblance to the corresponding one in the *Quatuor Navigationes* (p. 11).

They take their meals in common.

Bk. II. Ch. V. p. 161.

Ad has aulas prandii coenaeque statis horis tota syphograntia convenit, aeneae tubae clangore commonefacta, nisi qui aut in hospitiiis aut domi decumbunt.

Translation. *To thies halles at the set houres of dinner and supper cummith all the hole Siphograuntie or warde, warned by the noyse of a brasen trumpet; except such as be sicke in the hospitalles or els in their owne houses.*

Contempt for precious metals. Plato expresses his ideas in a more condensed form, whereas More dwells at great length on this point.

Bk. II. Ch. VI. p. 174.

Interim aurum argentumque &c. This passage is too long to quote here in full. In it More tells us, how in Utopia only worthless things are made of gold and silver. Further the humorous account of the reception of the ambassadors who are beautifully attired in gaudy dresses — an apparent satire

ἔπειτα οἴκησιν καὶ ταμεῖον μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲν τοιοῦτον, εἰς ὃ πᾶς ὁ βουλόμενος εἴσεισι

Translation. *In the first place, none of them should have any property of his own beyond what is absolutely necessary; neither should they have a private house or store closed against any one who has a mind to enter.*

Bk. III., p. 416.

φουῶντας δὲ εἰς συσσίτια ὥσπερ ἑστρατοπεδευομένους κοινῇ ζῆν

Translation. *And they will go to mess and live together like soldiers in a camp.*

Bk. III. p. 417.

ἀλλὰ μόνοις αὐτοῖς τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει μεταχειρίζεσθαι καὶ ἄπιεσθαι χρυσοῦ καὶ ἀργύρου οὐ θέμις, οὐδ' ὑπὸ τὸν αὐτὸν ὄροφον ἵεναι οὐδὲ περιάσθαι οὐδὲ πίνειν ἐξ ἀργύρου ἢ χρυσοῦ.

on Henry VIII's partiality for gorgeous apparel — and who are, therefore, mistaken by the children for bondsmen, on account of their wearing gold chains.

*Translation.* And they alone of all the citizens may not touch or handle silver or gold, or be under the same roof with them, or wear them, or drink from them.

Notice that this contempt for precious metals is also emphasised in the *Quatuor Navigationes*. (p. 11).

About women accompanying their husbands in war.

Bk. II. Ch. VIII. pp. 256/57.

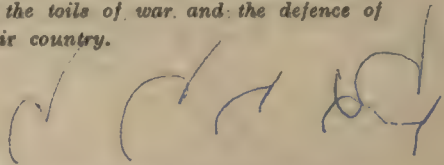
At scuti ad externum bellum ex ipsis nemo protahitur nolens, ita foeminas volentes in militiam comitari maritos adeo non prohibent, ut exhortentur etiam et laudibus incitent.

*Translation.* But as none of them ys thrust forth of his countrey into warre, agaynste hys wyll, so women that be wyllynge to accompanye their husbandes in times of warre be not prohybyted or stopped. Yea, they provoke and exhorte them to yt wyth prayses.

Bk. V. p. 457.

ἀποδυντέον δὴ ταῖς τῶν φυλάκων γυναιξίν, ἐπεὶ περ ἀρετὴν ἀντὶ ἱματίων ἀμφιέσσονται, καὶ κοινωνητέον πολέμου τε καὶ τῆς ἄλλης φυλακῆς τῆς περὶ τὴν πόλιν.

*Translation.* Then let the wives of our guardians strip, for their virtue will be their robe, and let them share in the toils of war and the defence of their country.



I would observe that the name of Plato occurs in the two Books of the *Utopia* and in entirely different chapters. Plato is not only mentioned in the beginning and then lost sight of. On the contrary: we are constantly reminded of his presence and he is constantly referred to as an authority whose judgment carries weight and whose opinion should be considered. It is also remarkable that both writers come to the bitter conclusion that a perfectly ideal State is an impossibility. For More agrees with Plato that no State can be called happy, unless it is governed by philosophers. But the people

at large are at enmity with them. Plato truly remarks that they (the philosophers) are unable to resist the madness of the world; therefore, in order to escape the storm they take shelter behind a wall and live their own lives. In these lines Plato lays bare his inner sentiments: there is no hope for the future, because the men who are to take the lead, who ought to guide others, are the very people that live in obscurity. To this conclusion More likewise comes, when towards the end of Bk. I. Raphael Hythloday is urgently entreated to go to courts and advise kings how they ought to manage the affairs of state. But Hythloday (More) who knew the conditions of his times just as well as Plato understood his, realised that the wise lessons given to kings would be rejected with scorn. Suggestive though these passages may be, yet I would stress this point that More shows his deepest veneration of Plato in the creation of his inimitable Raphael Hythloday. Critics, I am afraid, are too much inclined to take a one-sided view. They will consider Hythloday primarily as the sea-faring man who accompanies Amerigo Vespucci on his voyages of discovery. But Hythloday is not a sailor of the ordinary stamp. More is very particular about it; there should be no misunderstanding about his rank and station in life. When More meets Raphael for the first time at Antwerp, and observes to his friend Peter Gyles that "at the fyrste syghte I judged hym to be a maryner", the remark is not taken in good part at all, for Peter indignantly replies, "There ye were greatlye deceaved. He hayth sayled indede, not as the maryner Palynure, but as the experte and prudent prince Uliesses, yea, rather as the auntyent and sage Philosopher Plato". And as if this were not yet clear enough, he adds, "For thys same Raphaell Hythlodaye is verye well lerned in the Latyne tongue, but profounde and excellent in the greke tonge, wherein he ever bestowed more studye than in the lattyne, because he had geven hym selfe holye to the studye of Phylosophy."¹)

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 3.



In his creation of the sailor-philosopher, if I may call him so, More not only links the present with the past, but at the same time expresses his deep respect for the "auncyent and sage Philosopher." It is not only in his constant reference to Plato that More manifests his love of the classics : More was one of the great humanists of his time and showed his predilection for the ancients in a more general way too. His *Utopia* was written in Latin, the common language between scholars of various nationalities ; its inhabitants receive a classical education and are thoroughly familiar with the famous ancient writers ; the hero of the romance is a classical scholar, profoundly skilled in Greek. When all things are considered — the similarity in construction (the creation of a model State on a communistic basis), the frequent allusions to Plato's Republic, the love of the classics that pervades More's work — is it surprising that the student should be inclined to attach too great a value to the classical influence ? Yet, if he does so, he will wrong the writer and disparage his work. For a fair estimation of the extent of the classical influence I shall, therefore, have to extend my inquiries.

Differen-  
ces.

I would first of all observe that, though the writers have the same end in view, they work out their theme in quite a different manner. Plato is primarily and pre-eminently a philosopher, More is rather a politician. Plato unfolds to us his ideas about divine perfection, which is the idea of good, about human perfection, which is justice, and dwells on these questions at great length. Plato brings home to us that no State can be called happy, unless this virtue reigns supreme. According to him the State, the world, is the visible embodiment of it, and as he considers justice a condition sine qua non for the welfare of the State, he devotes the greater part of his work to its discussion. More does not treat his subject from a philosophical standpoint. In his work we shall look in vain for a lengthy treatise on the idea of good. What in Plato's work

is the cardinal point: the definition of justice and its indispensableness for the State, is in More's work condensed to a few lines. More only refers to his predecessor and assures the reader that he perfectly shares his opinions. For the rest the writer of the *Utopia* prefers to throw full light on social, economical and political questions and where Plato gives us a rather one-sided and imperfect idea of the management of the State — it is only the higher classes, especially the guardians that are treated at any length, the lowest order, that of the producers being hardly spoken of — More holds up a perfect picture of the internal affairs of his ideal commonwealth, discussing a variety and a range of social and economical subjects that might excite the envy of any political economist. But it is in his ideas, his views that More is thoroughly original and differs essentially from Plato. Let us first compare the communistic principles as developed by the two writers.

We have seen how Plato's State is divided into three classes of citizens: the rulers, the guardians and the producers. The lowest group may possess property and live its life in its own way, as long as it provides food for the other two. Whether Plato has ever considered if his treatment of the lowest class of citizens that have no rights and that have to work for the other members of his community is in accordance with his own principles on justice, I do not know. As it is, he devotes all his attention to the rulers that have to control and the guardians that have to defend the State. In our chapter on Plato we have inquired how they are educated, have pointed out that the communistic principles are carried to such an extreme that, in order to kill all sense of private property, the guardians are not even allowed to choose their own wives. The State couples the pairs that are fitted by mental and bodily qualifications for the propagation of a strong and healthy offspring and the children born to them are brought up as the children of the State. Plato reasons that, only when these stringent measures are taken, when the

Communism.

guardians are not allowed to have a family of their own, they can devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the interests of the community. We have furthermore noticed that Plato, in spite of little sympathy with contemporary conditions, is a child of his time, his work breathing the typical Hellenic spirit. What, in his *Republic*, reminds us strongly of the Spartan customs and institutions, is their public meals, their discarding the use of the precious metals for money, the hardy gymnastic training of their women, the severe discipline of their children, and above all the strict military drill of their men. In his commonwealth there is a rigid observance of iron discipline, nowhere is the subjugation of the individual to the State so completely realised, and it is the fighting man or soldier that occupies a very distinguished position in it. Let us now see how More develops his communistic principles. Evidently More wants to carry out the scheme more thoroughly, more radically, and more consistently by eliminating all ranks, for in Utopia all men are equal; there is no division into classes, as one group should not be privileged over another. It is true, for the proper management of the big "household" the necessary arrangements have been made, thus every thirty families choose an officer whom they call Syphogrant, and by a newer name Phylarch, and every ten Phylarchs with their three hundred families are again placed under a Tranibor, now called Chief Phylarch — two hundred in number, from whom, by a secret election a prince is chosen, — and it is equally true that these officials are carefully educated for the proper fulfilment of their duties, but it should be understood that they are appointed by the people themselves and have to see to it that the regulations made are strictly observed, one of the principal functions of the Syphogrants being to take heed that no man sits idle, but that every man applies himself to his craft with earnest diligence. Of a division into classes there is no question, far less would More allow one class (the farmers) to work for the others; on the



contrary, as an antidote against the general contempt in which the labourers were held in his time, he makes much of them in his romance and devotes special attention to the agricultural classes. And here is another marked difference between Plato and More. Whereas the former has little to say about the peasantry, the latter raises them to a position of pre-eminent importance. In Utopia husbandry is common to all people, no one being exempt from this useful occupation. It is possible, very likely even that More deals his strokes at the social conditions then prevailing in England, tacitly satirising them by depicting, in contrast, the Utopian treatment of artisans and labourers. Whatever may have been his motives, a fact it is that the agricultural, and in general, the producing classes, which, in Plato's structure are practically ignored, occupy a foremost position in More's work. With these facts before us, we shall have to admit, that, though More was inspired by Plato's communistic principles, he entirely goes his own way and follows his own ideas. This equally applies to another no less important subject. →

supplement from mat 106

In Plato's romance the typical citizens are soldiers, perfectly educated and splendidly equipped. They are the guardians of the State, who have to defend their country and to fight for it, and are treated with great distinction. To the mind of More the thought of war was highly repulsive. His Utopia was not to be a big camp, his citizens were not to be soldiers. They had likewise to be carefully educated, but More set before them the training of the intellect for peace. War he abhorred and this abhorrence he strove hard to inculcate upon the citizens of his State. His opinions on this subject were identical with those of his friends Erasmus and Collet; with them he agreed that an unjust peace was better than the justest war, and this opinion is strongly reflected in his *Utopia*, where the people hate strife, prefer stratagem to force, and do not shrink from resorting to what are generally considered as immoral intrigues

About the training of the citizens.

selected  
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and practices to prevent war or to minimize bloodshed. If, in spite of bribery and other devices, a conflict cannot be avoided, they hire mercenaries rather than sacrifice their own people, and, although money is unknown among them, they always keep a certain amount in case of emergency for the payment of these troops.<sup>1)</sup> Nor are these the only passages, suggestive and instructive though they are, which enable us to gauge the extent of the classical influence. Plato's pioneer's work as regards the education of women must also have strongly and warmly appealed to More, which may be concluded from the measures he proposed for the equalization of sexes. Yet we cannot fail to notice certain remarkable differences between the classic and the modern writer.

About the  
social  
position  
of women.

Plato starts from the perfect equality of man and woman, asserting that there is only a difference in sex and in bodily strength. ✓ For the rest he is of opinion that all the work done by men can also be performed by women, but he adds rather jocularly, ["though as a rule they cannot do it so well, and men can do all the work of women (even the weaving and the baking of cakes) and as a rule they do it better."<sup>2)</sup>] Plato also remarks that their tastes are alike: one has a predilection for medicine, another for music, and some, though not all, may have capabilities for war and government. Therefore we ought to give them the same education in music and gymnastic as we give to men. Plato goes even farther and wants women to be trained for warfare, assigning to them the lighter duties because of the comparative weakness of their nature. ✓ Though Plato's pioneer's work must be duly acknowledged here, we have to point out one or two errors which he seems to have overlooked. First of all there is the sexual relation between husband and wife, which is regulated by the authorities in such a manner ✓ that passion or impulse is absolutely excluded. Having discussed

1) See *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VIII. "Of Warfare."

2) *Republic*, Bk. V. Jowett's edition.

the question in the second chapter, we need not go in for unnecessary repetition. We have already said that, in our opinion, the methods adopted would, generally speaking, not be in the interest of the children. Considered from the standpoint of the women, we would add that a system in which the mothers are separated from their little ones, can only be harmful to women whose best education is the training of their own children, not to speak of the evil done by killing natural feelings of motherly affection and attachment. Another truth Plato ignores is that the distinction between man and woman is not merely confined to that of sex, and that the distinction of sex gives rise to differences in mind and feeling, for which fact due and proper allowance should be made in their education. Does not a nineteenth century poet illustrate very characteristically how wrong it would be if to woman the same tasks should be assigned as to man?

✓ For woman is not undeveloped man,  
But diverse: could we make her as the man,  
Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this,  
Not like to like, but like in difference.<sup>1)</sup>

If we want to form a correct estimate of More's ideas about female education and what measures he would take to raise women to a position of equality with men, we have but to read his correspondence with Mr. Gunnell, the tutor of his children. Very instructive is the "Letter written by Sir. Tho. More concerning the Education of his Family to Mr. Gunnell, their domestic tutor." <sup>2)</sup> We learn from it the mutual affection between parent and children, but above all the great value More attaches to the perfect education of women. In his introductory chapter to the *Utopia*, Lupton remarks, "If More could have foreseen the mighty power for good or evil two

1) Tennyson, *The Princess*.

2) *Tracts on Education and Hints on Education or Directions to Mothers in the Selection and Treatment of a Governess*, with an appendix by Chancellor More, London 1821, in the British Museum.



daughters of his own sovereign, reared on the same mental food as his own Margaret <sup>1)</sup>, would come to wield in the State, he might perhaps have stayed his hand." <sup>2)</sup> More might have done so, if his system of education were identical with an ignoble "cramming" system, an injudicious amassing of knowledge with an utter neglect of the moral and ethical side. Such a method would indeed have been a parody on good education. But More emphatically declares, ["As I prefer learning, united with virtue, to all the treasures of Princes, so I look upon the reputation of learning, when separated from good morals as merely infamy rendered notorious and conspicuous."] If the daughters of King Henry VIII had been educated according to his precepts, there would have been no cause for Lupton to express any anxiety or raise any doubts as to the efficacy of More's educational system. Profound scholar though he was, More considered virtue the first good and learning the second, and if he could have been the tutor of the two Queens Mary and Elizabeth, he would have taken every opportunity of warning them "to avoid the precipices of pride and vanity and walk in the smooth and level paths of modesty." <sup>3)</sup> He would have taught them how extremely difficult it is to resist "the ticklings of vanity, this distemper of pride and the extreme obstinacy with which this vice adheres to our breasts." <sup>3)</sup> He, therefore, exhorts tutors "to keep off this contagion, this pest of pride and continually to expose the folly and despicable nature of vanity" <sup>4)</sup> and entreats them "to represent that nothing is more noble than the humble modesty so often inculcated by Christ." The conclusion of this remarkable letter to Gunnel is most interesting, as it winds up with good morals as a climax. He says, "By this means you will render my children, who are

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1) More's eldest and favourite daughter.

2) Lupton's edition of the *Utopia*.

3) More, Letters p. 52.

4) More, Letters pp. 56 and 57.

dear to me by nature, and dearer still by learning and virtue, still more dear by an increase of knowledge and good morals." If his correspondence with Gunnel does not suffice to show how More instilled in his children a love of science and literature and prevailed upon them to read Plato and Sophocles, as well as Livy and Sallust and to study "the system of the heavenly bodies" in a time when a woman's occupations were limited to her needlework and her viol, or to Chaucer and the *Romaunt de la Rose*, how in general he strenuously endeavoured to raise women to a higher social level, we may peruse the excellent chapter on education in Bridgett's *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, in which Bridgett further illustrates that, like Plato, More stands foremost in the ranks of the defenders of female culture. The letters given in this chapter <sup>1)</sup> show that More, busy though he was, never ceased to superintend the education of his children, and that, though "the plague of vainglory must be banished from them", he knew how to praise. When his daughter Margaret writes an extremely good letter, he replies, "Since you have written to me a letter such that I would not only repay each line of it with a golden philippine, as Alexander did the verses of Cherilos, but, if my means were as great as my desire, I would reward each syllable with two gold ounces." <sup>2)</sup> Of women's intellectual inferiority to men — a hobby of contemporaries — he will not hear. Both (viz. men and women) are equally suited for those studies "by which reason is perfectioned, and becomes fruitful like a ploughed land on which the seed of good lessons has been sown," he writes to Gunnel. <sup>3)</sup> On no account does he want women to live in shameful ignorance, for he continues, ["If it be true that the soil of woman's brain be bad, and apter to bear bracken than corn, by which saying many keep women from study,

1) Chapter VIII.

2) Bridgett's *Life of More*, p. 135.

3) Ibid. p. 130.

I think, on the contrary, that a woman's wit is on that account all the more diligently to be cultivated, that nature's defect may be redressed by industry." <sup>1)</sup> In his own household More was making very successful educational experiments: his daughters, notably his eldest Margaret (who married William Roper, the well-known biographer of his father-in-law) became famous as scholars with whom even a man as Erasmus might correspond. And so great was the fame of their learning that in 1529, when they were married ladies, they were invited by the King to hold a kind of philosophical tournament in his presence. John Palsgrave, a prebendary of St. Paul's and tutor to the Duke of Richmond, Henry's son, writes to More in July 1529, "When your daughters disputed on philosophy afore the King's Grace, I would it had been my fortune to be present." <sup>1)</sup> From which remark we should not infer that More was trying hard to change his daughters into bluestockings. Far from it. Of a genial disposition, full of wit and sprightly humour, he took good care that his children should not get too much of the mental pabulum. After dinner there was pleasant recreation with music and discourse. This method of education is also applied in Utopia, where the women are carefully trained, and even allowed to be priests. ["Women, for that kynd is not excluded from pryesthode; howbeit fewe be chosen." <sup>2)</sup>] It is true, very few were so privileged, the number of priests being small, but still the women were eligible with the men. Does this admission of women to the priesthood point to any classical influence, as a precedent is to be found in the religious system of Greece and Rome? Much has been said about this passage. Some commentators think it strange that More as a staunch Roman Catholic could have allowed women to be priests. Bridgett sees in it nothing that is contrary even to Catholic discipline, which has ever given a high and honourable

1) Bridgett's *Life of More*, p. 139.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. IX. p. 132.



part to women, especially in religious orders.<sup>1)</sup> Mary Breese-Fuller in her article *Is Sir Thomas More Utopian?*<sup>2)</sup> remarks, "There is a hint of Protestantism in that their priests are married" (p. 224) and believes that these were Lutheran ideas. I can only advise this lady to read More's *Apology*, from which she will learn that More hated nothing more inveterately than Lutheran ideas.<sup>3)</sup> Let us not in an over-zealous mood try to find more in the passage than the writer can ever have meant himself. My opinion is that More's suggestions do not in any way interfere with his religious sentiments. He may have developed his ideas under classical influence, but I think it more likely that, by admitting women to the priesthood, the author wants, in a general way, to express his high esteem of the female sex and to intimate that he considers them capable of holding practically any position in the State. In this connection I would point out that the line quoted above is immediately followed by the characteristic remark, "For to no office among the Utopians is more honour and preeminence given."<sup>4)</sup>

To More, who loved an intimate family life above anything else in the world (was not his strong attachment to his wife and children one of the reasons why he could not be prevailed upon to go to court?)<sup>5)</sup> the marriage ceremonies in Plato's *Republic*, where the couples are assigned by lot and where love is not, must have been highly repulsive to him. His feelings on the subject are clear and are diametrically opposed to those of his predecessor.

About 5  
family  
life.

1) Bridgett. *Life of More*, p. 105.

2) *A Journal of Social Exploration*. Dec. 2, 1916.

3) See *Apology*.

4) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. IX. p. 132.

5) Compare *Letters and Papers*, Pref. Vol. I. p. XCVI for the reason why More disliked leaving his family. "Whenever we laymen are away," he wrote to Erasmus, "we are called back by the love of our wives and our family", and somewhat further on, "The King provides tolerably well for those whom I must take with me, but no consideration is paid to those whom I leave behind."

Whereas Plato with his stringent measures sacrifices family life for the welfare of the State, it is More, who with the same end in view, fosters an intimate family life for the benefit of the commonwealth. "More's *Utopia*, a picture of an ideal community, is a picture of his own household, only considerably enlarged. In his household he exemplified that, even if the individuals constituting the small community were differently inclined, there might be harmony and peace, provided they were ruled wisely and judiciously. He governed his model State with wonderful tact, assigning to each a task and insisting on its performance, allowing no one to be idle or to be occupied with trifles. In his family More imbued his children first with chaste and holy morals and then with learning. He impressed them with a love of justice and strict impartiality. His task was no easy one, his household consisting of individuals of different dispositions and talents. Erasmus to whom we owe one of the most charming pictures of More's domestic life, gives us the following enumeration of them. There was first of all his second wife, the step-mother of his children, who was "nec bella nec puella" as More would sometimes laughingly say to Erasmus. That he married her only a few months after the death of his first wife Jane Colt (1510), should, I believe, not be attributed to any want of respect or affection to her, but rather to the necessity of finding a trustworthy guardian for his children, the eldest of whom was then only six years of age. The lady, who was a widow and seven years older than her husband, has been compared to Xantippe. This is going too far : Mrs. Middleton may not have been of a very amiable disposition, but a termagant she was not ; besides she proved a good housekeeper and was kind to his children. More guided his wife with the same address as his daughters, always replying to her sarcastic remarks with complacency and poignant good humour, which rather pleased her. From the correspondence between More and his wife, when the former was called away on urgent matters of state, we do not

get the impression that More has to be classed amongst the number of "ill-matched" great men. Besides his three daughters Margaret, Elizabeth, and Cecily and his only son John, More had received into his household Alice Middleton, his step-daughter, and William Roper, Margaret's husband. When Alice married, her husband was equally allowed to live with them: hospitality, (a virtue on which More lays much stress in his *Utopia* <sup>1</sup>), he gladly practised in his household. William Roper was at that time a zealous Protestant, being "bewitched" by Luther's *De Libertate Christiana* and *De Captivitate Babylonica*. His apostasy caused much grief and sorrow, but not for a moment were family peace and concord disturbed. More frequently argued with his son-in-law in private, but when he saw that all was in vain, he at last talked with his daughter Margaret and said, "Meg, I have borne a long time with thy husband; I have reasoned and argued with him on these points of religion, and still give to him my poor fatherly counsel, but I perceive none of all this able to call him home; and therefore Meg, I will no longer dispute with him, but will clean give him over and get me to God and pray for him." More's tolerance on this occasion contrasts strangely with his intolerance in later years. <sup>2</sup>) To complete the picture mention must be made of another member of the household, Henry Patterson, the fool, since More has immortalised him in his romance, for the Utopians "sette greate store by fooles. And as it is greate reproche to do to annye of them hurte or iniury, so they prohibite not to take pleasure of foolyshnes. For that, they thynke doth mucche good to the fooles. And if any man be so sadde and sterne, that he cannot laughe nother at their wordes nor at their dedes, none of them be commytted to his tuition, for feare lest he would not ordre them gentilly and favorably enough, to whom they should brynge no delectation (for other goodnes

1) Bk. II. Ch. VII.

2) See *Apology*.



in them is none); muche lesse any proffyt shoulde they yelde hym." <sup>1)</sup> And again think of the delightful part the fool plays at Cardinal Morton's table, (Bk. I.) when he explains how to get rid of beggars and vagabonds. "But I will make a law, that all thies beggars shalbe distribute and bestowed into houses of religion. The men shalbe made laye bretherne, as they call them, and the women nunnes." <sup>2)</sup> This was then the small community that was ruled by a "wise and just prince." In this commonwealth there was no disturbance or strife and if there was any discord at all, the ruler, who truly loved the members of his State, appeased the parties and set all right again to the entire satisfaction of them all. More's management of his household proves how much depends on a wise and judicious government. <sup>3)</sup> His ideas are reproduced and expanded in his *Utopia*: there the principle of order is rigidly observed; the younger obeying and showing respect to their elders. ["The wyfes bee ministers to theyr husblandes, the chyldren to theyr parents, and to bee shorte, the yonger to theyr elders." <sup>4)</sup>] Every member of the community is free in the choice of his occupation, but if his choice is made, he is not allowed to be idle. As to their education and studies, the Utopians follow pretty much the same course of practice as More's children, names of classics such as Plato, Theophrastus, Euripides, Sophocles, Thucidides, he recommended for study to his daughters, being all met with in his *Utopia* (Bk. II. Ch. VI). In *Utopia* the man is free in the choice of his wife. The

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1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VII. p. 104.

2) Ibid. Bk. I. p. 28.

3) Was not More influenced by St. Augustine, who said, "Primitus ergo inest ei suorum cura : ad eos quippe habet opportuniorem facilioremque aditum consulendi vel naturae ordine, vel ipsius societatis humanae." (*De Civitate Dei*, Lib. XIX. Cap. XIV.) and did not he, in his household, apply the precepts of the Christian Father, who, in the same chapter continued, "Imperantenim qui consulunt : sicut vir uxori, parentes filiis, domini servis. Obediunt autem consulitur : sicut mulieres maritis, filii parentibus, servi dominis."

4) Bk. II. Ch. V. "On family life."

children are not taken away from their mothers, for "every mother is nource to her owne childe, onles other death or sycknes be the let." <sup>1)</sup>

I have dwelt at some length on More's ideas of family life as exemplified in his own household and in his *Utopia* to show that a greater contrast between Plato and More is hardly imaginable. In his fiction More was, like his predecessor, a zealous advocate of communism as far as an equal division of property was concerned, but he would on no account go to such extremes as Plato, whose radical measures were sure to destroy an intimate family life which he valued above anything else in the world.

Plato was seriously occupied with the intricate question of population and rightly feared that the rapid increase of the population might entail disastrous consequences (poverty, want). Therefore the magistrates not only couple husband and wife, but also regulate the number of marriages as well as the number of children. That More with his pronounced ideas on family life should solve the question of over-population altogether differently, is obvious. In *Utopia* it is ordained that in case of over-population the surplus shall be employed to colonize and cultivate the waste lands of the continent which are claimed as a right. <sup>sup 2</sup> *relation that is created & maintained*

Churton Collins remarks that the dramatic opening and setting were evidently suggested by Plato's *Republic*, Morton corresponding to Cephalus, Hythloday to Socrates, and the lawyer to Thrasymachus. <sup>2)</sup> I admit that there is much truth in the statement, but as Churton Collins only makes a bare hint, I shall here work out the idea. The character of Cephalus is indeed distinguished by gentleness and goodness and agrees with the favourable portrait of Morton, who is likewise "gentell in communycatyon, yet earneste and sage." It is Cephalus who raises the question of justice, the cardinal point in the *Republic*, it is Morton who puts the cardinal

1) Bk. II. Ch. V.

2) *Utopia*, Introduction, p. XLII.

question in the *Utopia*, the cause of the social evils in England.

// Thrasymachus, the personification of Sophism, is a vain and blustering adversary, but a mere child in argument and unable to hold out against Socrates. Incapable of defending his ideas, he vainly tries to cover his confusion with banter and insolence. He may not inappropriately be compared with the lawyer, who in the first Book of the *Utopia* is the troublesome opponent of Hythloday. He is constantly interrupting his clever adversary, and like the pompous and empty sophist he is utterly helpless in the hands of his opponent, who knows how and where to hit him most forcibly and at last "shaking his head, and making a wry mouth", is completely silenced. // But the most striking comparison is between Socrates and Hythloday. Both move in an atmosphere of irony, both are now jesting, now in earnest, now provoking, now appeasing and each of the interrogators is puzzled to gather from the other's look or tone whether he is speaking seriously, or whether he is merely joking. And again they agree in the essential point, that, although they will give reins to their humour, their purpose is primarily a serious one."

However, I cannot draw the parallel any further: for the *Republic* opens with a truly Greek scene: a festival in honour of the Goddess Bendis, which is held in the Piræus. Socrates and his companion Glaucus are about to leave the festival, when they are detained by a message from Polemarchus, who speedily appears, accompanied by Adimantus, the brother of Glaucus, who compels them to remain. They return to the house of Cephalus, Polemarchus' father, where they enter into the most animated conversation. In the *Utopia* the circumstances under which the principal characters come into contact, are entirely different. The meeting between Hythloday and More during the latter's stay at Antwerp does not remind one very strongly of the incident related in the Greek work.

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When I observed that we should not make too sweeping assertions as regards the classical influence, I had in mind a verdict in Churton Collins's work, "The general description of Utopia is plainly modelled on Plato's picture of Atlantis in the *Critias*." <sup>1)</sup>

Collins's views on the topographical problem I cannot share at all. To prove my standpoint I have put side by side a description of the two islands, on which the two following sketches are based. <sup>2)</sup>

*Atlantis.* <sup>3)</sup>

Looking towards the sea, but in the centre of the whole island there was a plain, said to have been very fertile and beautiful. Near this plain, and likewise in the centre of the island there was a mountain. Poseidon, who had received the island of Atlantis from the Gods, surrounded this mountain with alternate zones of sea and land. His successors constructed bridges over the zones, dug a deep and wide canal from the sea to the outermost zone, where they built an excellent harbour which was accessible to the largest vessels. The canal was three hundred feet in width, one hundred feet in depth and fifty stadia in length. The city lay in an oblong plain, surrounded by mountains which descended abruptly into the sea. The whole country was lofty and precipitous on the side of the ocean, but the country immediately surrounding the city was a level plain, itself hemmed in by mountains which descended towards the sea; it was smooth and even, and of an oblong shape, extending in one direction three thousand stadia, but across

*Utopia.* <sup>4)</sup>

The Iland of Utopia conteyneth in breadthe in the myddell part of it CC miles. Whiche bredthe continueth through the moste parte of the lande, savyng that by lytle and lytle it cometh in and waxeth narrower towardes the endes. Whiche fetchynge about a circuite or compasse of VC myles, do fashion the hole Ilande lyke to the newe mone. Betwene thys two corners the sea runneth in, divyding them a sonder by the distaunce of XI miles or there aboutes, and there surmounteth into a large and wide sea, which, by reason that the lande of every side compasseth it about and sheltreth it from the winde, is not rough nor mountith not with great waves, but almost floweth quiettlye, not muche unlike a great standing powle; and maketh almost al the space within the bellye of the lande in maner of a haven and to the great commoditie of the Inhabitauntes receaveth in shippes towardes every parte of the land. The forefrontes or frontiers of the two corners, what wythe fordys and shelves, and what with rockes, be very jeperdous and dangerous. In the middle

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- 1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 184.    2) See Appendix V.  
 3) In the *Critias*. (Jowett's edition) Vol. III, p. 519.  
 4) Churton Collins's edition. Bk. II. Ch. I. p. 48.

the centre island it was two thousand stadia.

The plain was rectangular and oblong and where falling out of the straight line, followed the circular ditch. The depth, width and length were incredible and gave the impression that a work of such an extent could never have been artificial. Yet it was. It received the stream which came down from the mountains, and winding round the plain and meeting at the city, was there let off into the sea. Further inland there were straight canals which were let off into the ditch leading to the sea.

distance betwene them both standeth up above the water a great rocke, which therfore is nothing perilous because it is in sight. Upon the top of this rocke is a faire and a strong towre builded, which thei holde with a garison of men. The outside of the lande is also full of havens; but the landing is so suerly defenced, what by nature and what by workmanship of mans hande, that a fewe defenders maye dryve backe many armies.

Howbeit, as they saye, and as the fassion of the place it selfe dothe partly shewe, it was not ever compassed about with the sea. But Kyng Utopus.... caused XV myles space of uplandyshe grounde, where the sea had no passage, to be cut and dygged up; and so brought the sea rounde about the lande.

I must confess that I see little agreement between the two islands and it is not clear to me how Churton Collins can maintain that More's indebtedness to the *Critias* was almost equally great as to the *Republic*. That More found in Atlantis the archetype, in the physical description of Atlantis a model for the physical description of Utopia is hardly conceivable. In this respect the influence of the *Quatuor Navigationes* is far more evident. Granted even that Plato's narrative in the *Critias* actually inspired the creation of *Utopia*, all we can say is that More made a very poor use of the classical source, and it is a pity that Collins raised this question at all: by doing so, he has only drawn attention to one of the weakest parts in More's romance. For what is Utopia after all? The answer is briefly this: a crescent-shaped island, which in former times was connected with the mainland till King Utopus "caused XV myles space of uplandyshe ground, where the sea had no passage, to be cut and dygged up." That is all. From a geographical standpoint the

two islands are altogether different : the one is an island with a plain in the centre, the other a strip of land very much shaped like a horseshoe. Atlantis is built on an ingeniously devised plan ; the construction of alternate zones of water and land involving the necessity for a comprehensive drainage system. To this effect numerous straight canals were dug and the water was carefully conveyed by aqueducts along the bridges to the outer circles. Altogether the arrangements made in Atlantis remind one somewhat of the system of "impoldering" in Holland. In this connection it is worth while to read the interesting article on the subject in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.<sup>1)</sup>

Remains the question whether in other respects a parallel could be drawn between the two. Are both imaginary islands ? Utopia no doubt is. More has with great art completely baffled all attempts to localize or identify his earthly paradise. His friends were anxious to know about the exact situation, but the mystification was kept up in two letters, one written by Peter Giles<sup>2)</sup> to Busleyden<sup>3)</sup> and one written by More himself to Giles. In his first letter there is Giles's account of the accident which prevented him from catching what Hythloday said about the exact situation of Utopia. "And the same, I wot not how, by a certen evell and unluckie chaunce escaped us bothe. For when Raphael was speaking therof, one of master Mores servauntes came to him, and whispered in his eare. Wherefore I beyng then of purpose more earnestly addict to heare, one of the company, by reason of cold taken, I thinke, a shippeborde, coughed out so loude, that he toke from my hearinge certen of his wordes."<sup>4)</sup>

With Swift-like verisimilitude More explains how his attention

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1) Consult article on Holland.

2) Peter Giles whom More met at Antwerp and who introduced him to Hythloday (see next chapter). With More and Erasmus he lived on terms of cordial friendship.

3) Hierome Busleyden, Master of Requests and a councillor of Charles V ; best known by his foundation of the Collegium Trilingue in the University of Louvain for teaching Hebrew, Greek and Latin. 4) Lupton's edition, pp. XCVIII and XCIX.



had been diverted by the entrance of a servant who whispered in his ear, and how Giles had been equally unlucky, when, at a critical moment, one of the company who had caught a cold, chanced to cough so loudly that it drowned what Hythloday said.

*was thus done it imaginary*  
 In the epistle to Peter Giles, More advises his friend to apply directly to Hythloday, "for neither we remembred to enquire of hym nor he to tell us, in what parte of that newe worlde Utopia is situate. The whiche thinge I had rather have spent no small somme of money then that it should thus have escaped us ; aswell for that I am ashamed to be ignoraunt in what sea that Ilande standeth, wherof I write so longe a treatyse." <sup>1)</sup> But there are other reasons why he would like to know, for he further informs his friend that a pious and orthodox theologian is very anxious to visit it, and encourage Christianity among the natives and has already resolved to apply to the Pope to be made its bishop. <sup>2)</sup> There is besides a difference of opinion between him and his page John Clement, <sup>3)</sup> who maintains that the length of the bridge of Amaurote was not 500 but 300 paces. Peter Giles will surely be kind enough to inquire, "for trifle though it is," More continues, "I will take good hede that there be in my booke nothing false." That the elaborate mystification had another purpose than a merely artistic one, I have explained elsewhere.

Whether Atlantis must be looked upon as a legendary or imaginary island, is still a matter of uncertainty. To the particulars supplied in Plato's *Dialogues*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <sup>4)</sup> adds, "It is impossible to decide how far this legend is due to Plato's inventions and how far it is based on facts of which no record remains. Medieval writers believed it true and were fortified in their belief by numerous traditions of islands in the western sea, which offered various points

1) Lupton's edition, p. 7.

2) See *Letters and Papers*, No. 2726.

3) John Clement was taken into the household of Sir Thomas More, whose adopted daughter, Margaret Gigs, he afterwards married.

4) See article on Atlantis.

of resemblance to Atlantis. Such in particular were the Greek Isles of the Blest or Fortunate Islands, the Welsh Avalon, the Portuguese Antilia or Isle of Seven Cities and St. Brendan's island, the subject of many sagas in many languages. These helped to maintain the tradition of an earthly paradise, which had become associated with the myth of Atlantis, and all except Avalon were marked in maps of the 14th and 15th centuries, and formed the object of voyages of discovery, in one case (St. Brendan's island) until the 18th century. After the Renaissance numerous attempts were made to rationalize the myth of Atlantis. The island was variously identified with America, Scandinavia, the Canaries and even Palestine ; ethnologists saw in its inhabitants the ancestors of the Guanchos, the Basques or the ancient Italians and even in the 17th and 18th centuries the credibility of the whole legend was seriously debated and sometimes admitted, even by Montaigne, Buffon and Voltaire."

Am I wrong in supposing that in the classical period Plato was the only one who wrote about Atlantis? As far as I know, other classical writers who devoted themselves more or less to physical science : Hesiodus, Anaximander, Xenophanes, Xanthus, Herodotus, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Philolaus, Empedocles, Democritus, Anaxagoras, seem not to have occupied themselves with this problem.

In 1664 there appeared a booklet by Athanasius Kircher, entitled *Mundus Subterraneus*, which contains a map of "the isle of Atlantis between Europe and North America." I have not been able to procure this work and I do not know what the map looks like and in what respects it bears any resemblance to the one printed here. A few years after Nicolaus Steno wrote about the disappearance of Atlantis in *De Solido intra solidum naturaliter contento* (1669 in Florence). This book is very rare, but a French translation of it appeared by Eliede Beaumont in the *Annales des Sciences naturelles*, Vol. XXV. (1832). In a later period (especially in the second half of the 19th century) Atlantis again drew the attention of geologists,

notably of Ed. Hull in his work *On the Geological Age of the North Atlantic Ocean*, Scientific Transaction of the Royal Dublin Society, 1885; of Ed. Suess, who is of opinion that Atlantis must be identified with Greenland <sup>1)</sup>, and last not least of K. A. von Zittel, who in his *Geschichte der Geologie und Paläontologie* (p. 7) refers to Plato and speaks of "diese in neuester Zeit wieder in der Geologie zu Ehren gekommene Atlantis." These particulars I give to show that the Atlantis-problem cannot be dismissed as a mere myth or fable. <sup>2)</sup>

I fail to understand what induced More to describe the island as he did. How to account for its peculiar crescent shape? Suppositions are all the more hazardous, as More constantly blends the real and the imaginary, so that it is almost impossible to distinguish between fiction and truth. Yet I could imagine that the case might have been somewhat like this. From the further description of the island <sup>3)</sup>, it becomes manifest that More, when speaking of Utopia such as it was long ago, is tacitly satirising the morals and institutions of his own nation and countrymen, for in Utopia the houses "were very lowe and lyke homelye cottages" — a direct reference to the mean hovels and mud walls, which, in More's time and long afterwards disgraced London. <sup>4)</sup> Now I am inclined to believe that More purposely changed the configuration of the island, lest the obvious resemblance should expose him to unnecessary danger. If people understood too much, it would be very hard for the writer to keep up the purely fictitious character of his work. The island was not to have a special shape that was to betray its origin. Hence also

1) Ed. Suers. *Das Antlitz der Erde*, 1888 Vol. II. p. 317.

2) Jowett is of opinion that the story is far more likely to have been invented by Plato than to have been brought by Solon from Egypt. (See *Timaeus*, in the Jowett's edition, Oxford, 1892, Vol. III, p. 431). See also Mr. G. Keller, *Atlantis in Vragen van den Dag* (October, 1922, p. 755) and Jan C. M. Kruisinga, *Atlantis in Vragen van den Dag* (October, 1922, p. 873).

3) *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. I. and Ch. II.

4) See next chapter.



the fictitious names: Utopia = nowhere, no-place; its founder Utopus = no place one; its capital Amaurote = the dim (phantom) city; its river, the Anyder = a waterless river: a rivier which is no river.

In the preceding pages I have tried to describe the circumstances under which More composed his *Utopia*. He borrowed important features for his sketch from Plato's *Republic*, to which he was indebted for the model of his fiction and for other suggestions, notably on communism, equalization of sexes, pre-eminent qualities of the rulers. I pointed out that Plato and More attempted different things. The former, drawing perfect men in a perfect State, had a purely philosophical intent, whereas More stressed the social side of the problem and tried to give forcible and cogent lessons in teaching the true object of civilized government; his social suggestions being on the whole less abstract and more practical than those of Plato. I furthermore pointed out that the form which More gave to his narrative connected it with Amerigo Vespucci's *Quatuor Navigationes*, but that the plan and the details of the work were mainly the invention of his ingenious mind. The inimitable Raphael Hythloday is also More's creation. Masterly is the way in which he introduces this authority in the first Book. More's introduction to Hythloday, whom he meets during his enforced stay in Antwerp, is so natural that, although we know the account to be fictitious, it has, even for us, all the appearance of a genuine narrative. More is no doubt gifted with a wonderful power of invention. It is on the few lines in the Latin translation of the Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci that he founds his tale which he works out with admirable skill.

Like Chaucer before him, like Shakespeare after him, More drew from other sources, but like these literary geniuses he had the wonderful gift of working out his ideas in a thoroughly original manner.

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of purgatory  
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## CHAPTER V.

### MORE'S UTOPIA IN THE FRAME OF THE TIMES.

I believe the quiet admission we are all of us so ready to make, that because things have long been wrong, it is impossible they should ever be right, is one of the most fatal sources of misery and crime.

(Ruskin, *Architecture and Painting II*).

The two important works which made their appearance during the period embraced in this work, which caused a stir among men of letters were the Greek Testament of Erasmus and the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More. When the Testament appeared, it was applauded by those whom we may have regarded as the most zealous adherents of the old religion. The experiment was a bold one, for in his edition and translation of the New Testament, Erasmus meant to subvert the authority of the Vulgate, to show that much of the popular theology of the day, its errors and misconceptions, were founded entirely on a misapprehension of the original meaning and inextricably entangled with the old Latin version. His work found readers everywhere, not merely in universities and among bishops, but with friars and monks and other religious orders. It was talked over in the common rooms of Oxford and Cambridge, declaimed against before lord-mayors and corporations. The universal interest taken in this work of Erasmus shows that the age was not so illiterate as it is often assumed to be.

Thomas More was much pleased with Erasmus' version of the New Testament, but anticipating difficulties, he conjured him "not to be hasty to publish and carefully avoid all occasion of giving

offence.”<sup>1)</sup> More's *Utopia* enjoyed a similar popularity, but on entirely different grounds. It was fitted to appeal to a vast circle of readers by its wide generalizations, its lofty aims and profound wisdom. Erasmus was enthusiastic about his friend's work, and wrote on March 8, 1517, “Send the *Utopia* at your earliest opportunity. A burgomaster at Antwerp is so pleased with it, he knows it all by heart.”<sup>2)</sup> Its popularity is further attested by numerous editions. It was printed at Louvain in 1516. The year after Lupset informed Erasmus that he intended getting a new edition printed<sup>3)</sup>, and on March 5, 1518 Erasmus wrote to More that he had seen a French edition at Louvain.<sup>4)</sup>

In the preceding chapter we have inquired in how far More's masterpiece might be looked upon as an outcome of the Renaissance and tried to throw some light on this subject. We shall now consider his romance from quite a different point of view, and discuss it as an exponent of the social, economical and political conditions of the times. From the very outset I wish to state emphatically that for a due appreciation of the work, a thorough knowledge of the history of the period is absolutely indispensable. But for the assistance of some very excellent historical sources many allusions in the *Utopia* to contemporary evils and shortcomings are lost upon us. Collins's edition of the *Utopia* was valuable for the suggestion of some of these sources. Frederick J. Furnival's *Ballads from Manuscripts*, printed by the Ballad Society, 1868—1872, with its vivid sketch of the reign of Henry VIII is too well known to require any comment; nor need I call special attention to the superior *History* of Brewer, and the popular though somewhat partial *History* of Froude. But a more than passing

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1) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. II. part. I. No. 2492 letter dated October 31, 1516.

2) *Ibid.* No. 2996.

3) *Ibid.* No. 3684.

4) *Ibid.* No. 3991.



mention must be made of a work little known in Holland, and which has enabled me to prosecute and extend my inquiries. I mean *Letters and Papers, foreign and domestic of the reign of Henry VIII*, arranged and catalogued by J. S. Brewer, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls and with the sanction of Her Majesty ; London, Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1862. This catalogue embraces an abstract of all Letters and Miscellaneous Papers, illustrative of the reign of Henry VIII, foreign and domestic. Documents spread all over England and dispersed in different offices are here for the first time brought together and arranged chronologically. They consisted originally of three hundred and twenty-eight miscellaneous volumes found in the Rolls House, two hundred and forty-two bundles and books in the State Paper Office. They comprise the entire diplomatic correspondence carried on under Henry VIII, and as it was customary to confiscate, on their disgrace, not only the property of great men (such as Wolsey, Cromwell and others), but also their papers, many letters and memoranda have been preserved, detailing the most secret history of the King's ministers. The range of subjects discussed in these *Letters and Papers* is enormous, no distinction being made between official and private documents : letters on personal matters and domestic expenditure, bills for ribbons, shoes and millinery, receipts for apple pies and salves are sometimes found in grotesque juxtaposition with royal bulls or instructions to plenipotentiaries. How these papers travelled from the Treasury of the Exchequer to the Rolls House, from there to the State Paper Office, finally to be deposited in the British Museum, does not concern us at present. Enough that a systematic arrangement of the documents was an extremely difficult and fatiguing task, requiring more than common patience and skill. Addresses were detached from the bodies of the letters to which they belonged ; long and tedious researches had to be made for obscure names, and as dates were frequently obliterated, it



was very hard to determine the due sequence of papers referring to diplomatic correspondence. This uncertainty in the chronology of the times was even more perplexing, when we consider the different modes of calculation adopted by various nations, some following the Roman, some the old style, the Emperor Maximilian now availing himself of the one, now of the other. Letters in cipher had to be deciphered, the mutilated condition of several papers occasioned great trouble. This tremendous work has been done carefully and successfully, and as a result of this energetic labour the world's history is enriched with fourteen big volumes of *State Papers and Letters*, carefully examined, authenticated and catalogued. It was printed at the expense of the British Government, and present such a mass of material, not only for the reign of Henry VIII, but of Europe in general, during a most momentous crisis in history, that in interest and completeness no parallel will easily be found in any other country. These papers, therefore, have a claim on the consideration of the historical student, beyond the personal importance of the names under which they were published. I have deemed it necessary to draw special attention to this unique work, first of all because I am indebted to it for many valuable data which have enabled me to set right certain errors or misunderstandings, but also because I found that the work is very little used in Holland. When I consulted the collection in the Royal Library at The Hague, I found that the General Index (which has to be consulted for the numbers of the documents) was not even cut! the officials assuring me that it was seldom asked for. The catalogue — and that is perhaps its greatest merit — gives us the *primary* source, from which the student is to draw his conclusions unbiassed by comments of partial historians. The extremely interesting correspondence between Erasmus and his friends Collet and More will amply reward the perusal of this valuable collection.

To return to the *Utopia*. A somewhat critical survey will lead to the following conclusion :

- I. that the first part of the work (Book I.) is a general *exposé* of the deplorable state and condition of England in the times of Thomas More, and
- II. that the second part (Book II.) is a kind of counterpart to the first, describing an ideal commonwealth, a standard of social and political regulations, being as such a bitter and cutting satire on the morals of the times.

That More has given a very faithful and vivid picture of the evils and shortcomings of his age, and that his imaginary conceptions of political institutions have constant reference to the actual condition of society such as he saw it, is a fact readily admitted by all students of the period under discussion, but that More did infinitely more than this, that More was one of the very few writers who exposed the evils and commented on them not for the sake of satire only, but with the noble intention to improve society, is a circumstance which most critics either overlook or do not pay sufficient attention to. To satirise the habits and customs, regulations and institutions of one's countrymen, is a comparatively easy task and pretty sure of success ; to suggest remedies for the removal of the wrongs and evils is a task far more difficult.

The statement that we cannot discuss the *Utopia* without knowing the history and the spirit of the times, is correct, but requires some extension ; we ought to add : nor without knowing particulars about the life and character of its author, in other words, the biographical element cannot be neglected. It is the deplorable state of his country and of Europe in general and its keen influence upon More's susceptible and highly receptive character that prompted him to publish a work in which he, the philanthropist, could paint the world such as he saw it and such as he would like it to be.

History throws light upon the injustice of social and political



contrasts, a man's nature explains how these wrongs affect him and how — as in the case of More — he is irresistibly drawn on to expose them. That is why these two elements — the historical and the biographical — form the indissoluble and indispensable link for the correct understanding and full appreciation of a work that is of equal interest to the student of moral and political history and to the student of economy and theology. To assign to the *Utopia* a place in literature by the side of other works of a similar tendency, such as *The Tale of a Tub*, *Gulliver's Travels* would fall outside the scope of the subject under discussion, but we would remark here that there is hardly any work of this class that covers such a wide range of subjects and exhibits such a multiplicity of projects as More's *Utopia*. Rightly does Churton Collins observe that the work may be regarded as a textbook in the study of the social and political history of the 16th century.<sup>1)</sup> No less an authority than Erasmus supports the statement, when on February 24, 1517 he writes to William Cope, a friend of his, advising him to send for More's *Utopia*, if he wishes to learn the true source of all political evils.<sup>2)</sup> Indeed, also by his contemporaries More's work was regarded as a mirror of the political and social evils of the times.

For the present purpose two methods may be followed: we may either give an historical survey of the general state and condition of England in the beginning of the 16th century and apply the data to More's masterpiece, or we may start from the *Utopia* itself and take this work as the basis for all further discussions. After mature consideration I have decided upon taking the latter course, because when starting from the *Utopia*, the risk of leaving certain points undiscussed will be reduced to a minimum. Besides, does not the title at the head of this chapter suggest that we are

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1) See preface to Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*.

2) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. II. part I. No. 2962.

to consider More's romance as the picture, and the historical surroundings as its frame?

Dispute  
between  
Henry VIII  
and  
Charles V.

More begins his account by informing us that the King of England "having some differences of no small consequence with the most serene Prince of Castile", sent him to Flanders. What these differences are about, More does not tell us; this point, therefore, wants some elucidation. For some time there had been a strained relation between Henry VIII, King of England, and the Prince of Castile (the later Emperor Charles V), as negotiations about a proposed marriage between the Prince and the King's sister (the Princess Mary) had been broken off. Henry, piqued and irritated by the step which Charles's advisers had taken, wanted to revenge himself by prohibiting the exportation of wool to Flanders, then the chief wool-market on the continent of Europe. By taking this measure the King had evidently overlooked the fact that his own merchants could not get rid of their stocks, so that the effect of the blow was even more disastrous to the English traders than to the Flemish. It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that this dispute about the wool-export should be settled without any delay, and an Embassy was accordingly sent to the Low Countries at whose head was placed Cuthbert Tunstall, a man not only distinguished by his scholarship, but also by his humanity.<sup>1)</sup> The favourable account of his learning and virtues in the beginning of Bk. I. is, therefore, fully justified. At the special request of the London merchants More was also attached to the Embassy, to represent them, which may be alleged as a proof of the high esteem in which he was held. The Embassy arrived at Bruges on May 18, 1515, which we know

1) See *Letters and Papers*, Vol. II. part. I. No. 422, which runs as follows: 7 May 1515. For Cuthbert Tunstall, L. L. D. Rich. Sampson. L. L. D. Sir Th. Spynell (= Spinelly), Th. More and John Clyfford, governor of the English merchants. Appointment as ambassadors to Charles, Prince of Castile, for continuance of the treaties of intercourse made between Henry VII and Philip, late King of Castile, dated London 30 April, 1506 and 20 Febr. 1495. Westm. 7 May 7. Henry VIII.

from a letter from Sir Th. Spynell (Spinelly) addressed to the King. In this long and interesting epistle Henry VIII is informed that Dr. Dunstable<sup>1)</sup> and Mr. More have arrived in this town (Bruges).<sup>2)</sup> The task of the deputies was no easy one, and Richard Sampson, anticipating difficulties, advised Wolsey "to take a gentle course in Flanders."<sup>3)</sup> Sampson proved to be right, for on July 7, 1515 he informs Wolsey that "they (the Flemings) are deaf and dull to understand reason in this matter and that they complained of other injuries besides those of the staple in their commerce with England"<sup>4)</sup>; followed on July 9 by a letter from Tunstall to Wolsey, short but to the point. "Have received a plain nay from the commissioners. Will be glad to know Wolsey's mind."<sup>5)</sup> And on July 20 an epistle<sup>6)</sup> is sent to Henry VIII, signed by C. Tunstall, Thomas More, John Clyfford, informing His Majesty that "the Commissioners have desired respite in order to send the replication to the Prince's Council."<sup>7)</sup> Which meant that the deputies had to withdraw to Brussels "to know their Prince's pleasure." In the meantime More went to Antwerp, where he made the acquaintance of Peter Giles<sup>8)</sup>, a distinguished citizen of Antwerp. During his stay in this city he employed his leisure time in writing the second Book of the *Utopia* (the first he composed later). Churton Collins remarks that More returned to England towards the end of the same year.<sup>9)</sup> I have reason to believe that it was somewhat later, for on February 17, 1516 we find Ammonius (secretary for the Latin and Italian tongues to Henry VIII, and friend and corres-

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1) Tunstall.

2) *Letters and Papers*, Vol II. part I. No. 473.

3) Ibid. No. 480.

4) Ibid. Vol. II. part. I. No. 672.

5) Ibid. No. 679.

6) Now somewhat mutilated.

7) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. II. part I. No. 732.

8) Peter Giles or Aegidius, to whom More dedicated his *Utopia*.

9) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. XV.



pondent of Erasmus) writing a long epistle to the latter, in which he says, "More has completed his mission to Belgium and has returned home." <sup>1)</sup> It is true, the exact date of his return is not specially mentioned, but as Ammonius carried on a brisk correspondence with Erasmus, there is every reason to assume that he should have informed his friend of More's return without any delay.

At Antwerp Peter Giles introduced More to Raphael Hythloday, the sailor-philosopher, as I called him in the preceding chapter. At the request of his two companions, Hythloday begins to tell them about his adventures and how, in course of time, he has seen many communities (more particularly the commonwealth of the Utopians) whose customs and laws might serve as examples to European countries. It is interesting to notice that from this moment the satire begins, for to Peter's question why he has never gone yet to some king to advise him by the excellent examples he could set before him, Hythloday replies that he does not want to enslave himself to any king whatever. "Nowe I lyve at lybertye, after myn owne mynde and pleasure; whiche I thynke verye fewe of thes greate states and peeres of realmes can saye." <sup>2)</sup> Here is a direct allusion to More's life and his experiences at the English court. Distinguished by his tact and the extraordinary charm of his manners, his temper and his conversation, he was soon singled out by the King who took great delight in his company, and so often sent for him, that More felt more like a slave than a free, independent citizen. "He soon perceiving that he could not be two days absent from the Court, but he must be sent for again, and much misliking the restraint of his liberty, began thereupon to dissemble his mirth, and so by little and little to disuse himself, that he from henceforth at such seasons was no more so ordinarily sent for." <sup>3)</sup> But the

About  
kings.

1) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. II. part. I. No. 2814.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 8.

3) *The Life of Sir Thomas More* by his Great Grandson Thomas More, London, 1726, p. 48.

keynote is struck in the further remarks on kings. "The moste parte of all princes have more delyte in warlike matters and feates of chevalrie (the knowledge wherof I nother have nor desire), than in the good feates of peace; and employe much more study howe by right or by wrong to enlarge their dominions, than howe well and peaceable to rule and governe that they have all redie." 1)

Here is a vehement attack on the shortcomings of ruling princes: their incredible selfishness, their despicable greed and their shameful indifference as regards their subjects' interests. In the preceding chapter we remarked how strange it was that More could not be persuaded to go to Court, a distinction which any other would have joyfully accepted, some critics ascribing his reluctance to his modesty and his aversion to public life. I do not believe this is the reason. I have already pointed out that More was strongly attached to his household and that nothing was more disagreeable to him than a prolonged absence from his happy home. But there was something else. More had little faith either in kings as masters, or in the prospects of their servants. What the gratitude of kings meant he realised then already, though he had occasion to understand much better some eighteen years later. "If my head would win the King a castle in France," he once said gloomily to his son-in-law Roper, "it should not fail to go." 2) There can be no doubt that, what More in the first Book of his *Utopia* put into the mouth of Hythloday, represented his own opinions. More realised that Government was absolutely identified with the will of the sovereign. Any wrong, any injustice, any violation of the law was a more tolerable evil than disobedience or opposition to the will of the Prince. The Christian kings of the 16th century were imperious, headstrong, passionate and arbitrary, immersed in the games of war and ambition, impatient of contradiction. No wonder, that More, perfectly happy

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 9.

2) *The Life of Sir Thomas More* by William Roper, London, 1903, p. 22.

in his home and contented with the fulfilment of his daily professional duties, felt very little inclined to comply with the request of the King. However, who could resist the wish of the monarch ? There can only be one end to the importunities of kings under such circumstances, and in March 1517 we find Erasmus writing to Tunstall that More had been "dragged to Court."

That More's critique on the conduct of princes was by no means exaggerated, some historical facts may show.

The perfidity, cunning, hypocrisy and insincerity of Ferdinand of Aragon, father of Catherine of Aragon, consequently the father-in-law of Henry VIII, King of England, may be illustrated by the following examples.

In 1492 Ferdinand treats the Moors treacherously and violates a promise of toleration, which leads to the conquest of Granada and the expulsion of the Moors from Spain, for which "noble" deed the Pope confers on him the title of "Ferdinand the Catholic."

In 1500 the same Ferdinand takes part in the conquest of Naples, and in spite of treaties with his allies, makes himself master of it in 1503.

In 1511 Ferdinand forms the Holy League with the Pope (Julius II) and the Emperor of Germany (Maximilian I) against France. Henry VIII, burning for military glory and eager to take up the old feud with the French King, is easily persuaded by his wily father-in-law to join him. English troops are sent, but the rapacious and perfidious Ferdinand employs them *not* to satisfy Henry's selfish demands, but to wrest Navarre from France (1512) and to add this province to his own dominions, thus making his son-in-law the laughing-stock of Europe. How Henry wanted to be revenged, how he in his turn tried, with the assistance of Lewis (whom he now befriended !) to expel Ferdinand from Navarre, as a punishment for having violated his engagements, how bitterly Henry



reproached his wife with her father's infidelity and vented his anger against Catherine in no measured terms, has all come down to us through contemporary correspondence. <sup>1)</sup>

James IV, King of Scots was, like his brother of Spain, notorious for his prevarications and subterfuges, but he lacked the latter's cunning, thus "plunging and floundering from one false statement or imprudent admission to another." <sup>2)</sup> His ignoble career he ended in 1513, when he violated a treaty with Henry VIII on account of the rupture between England and France; war broke out anew, and in the battle of Flodden James IV paid the penalty of his perfidy with his own life, after having recklessly sacrificed the lives of ten thousand of his countrymen. <sup>3)</sup>

These events happened only a few years before More composed his *Utopia*, and knowing the incorruptibility of this man, who lived in a singularly corruptible age, we need not be surprised that Hythloday again and again refers to this point and that towards the end of Book I he is again urgently entreated to go to the courts of princes, that they may profit by his wise remarks. But Hythloday is inexorable and, reflecting More's own sentiments, he gravely remarks, "Plato doubteles dyd well forsee, oneles kynges themselves would applye their myndes to the studye of philosophie, that elles they would never thoroughly allowe the counsell of philosophers; beyng themselves before ever from their tender age infectyd and corrupt with perverse and evyll opinions." <sup>4)</sup>

In Hythloday's account of the Achorians, who conquered another country and who found that the trouble of keeping it was greater

1) See Preface to *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I.

2) Ibid.

3) Read especially *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I. No. 4502, letter from Henry VIII to Leo X. "James was seduced by France, from whom he received a large sum of gold and a great number of men and guns, to invade England in Henry's absence, by which he has inflicted a heavy blow upon his own kingdom", &c.

4) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 31.

than that by which it was gained, there is no doubt a further illustration of the greed of princes and their inordinate desire to extend their dominions. Helen Taylor points out that, when Hythloday speaks of "the conquered people who were always either in rebellion or exposed to foreign invasion, while their King, distracted with the care of two kingdoms, was the less able to apply his mind to the interest of either, so that after mature consideration he gave up one of the two," More threw a prophetic glance into the future and hinted at the critical relation between England and Ireland in our days. <sup>1)</sup> The warlike attempts of the Achorians, the vast confusions and the consumption both of treasure and of people have, of course, a direct reference to the reign of Henry VIII, who, without regarding the interests of his people, recklessly plunged into a war, only and exclusively to gratify his own vanity.

Hythloday then proceeds to expose the bad counsellors (the ministers of the kings) whose chief contrivances and consultations were "what subtell crafte they myght invente to enryche the King with greate treasures of money." <sup>2)</sup> I am very much inclined to ascribe this passage more particularly to the proverbial greediness and rapacity of Henry VII, the more so as More was by no means favourably disposed to this monarch. In 1504, shortly after More was returned to Parliament, Henry VII demanded heavy subsidies for the marriage of his eldest daughter Margaret with James IV, King of Scots. More, considering the exaction as absolutely unconstitutional, opposed it so vehemently that the request was denied, "so that one Mr. Tiler, one of the King's privy Chamber went presently from the house and told his Majesty that a beardless boy had disappointed him of all his expectation." <sup>3)</sup>

1) Helen Taylor, *Sir Thomas More on the Politics of To-day*. (Fortnightly Review, 1870).

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 34.

3) *The Life of Sir Thomas More* by his Great Grandson, pp. 35 and 36 and especially Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, London, 1868. Vol. II. Ch. XXX. p. 9.

What this opposition to the King's wishes meant for More has been told by his biographers. The King revenged himself by seeking a pretext to fine his father £ 100.— and by keeping him in the Tower till it was paid. So much did he take the unjust and tyrannical treatment of the monarch to heart that for the time being he thought of retiring from public life, and if it had not been for the powerful influence of John Collet, then Dean of St. Paul's, "the director of his life", we should never have become acquainted with More's masterpiece. Indeed the treatment he met with both at the hands of this sovereign and of his son Henry VIII fully accounts for the bitter satire on kings, and if the latter had taken the trouble of reading the *Utopia* seriously, he might have learned that in the guidance of his subjects he was responsible to some other will than his own.

The wicked influence of flattering counsellors is then illustrated by examples which have a direct reference to historical facts. One proposes to raise the value of specie, when the King's debts are large and lowering it, when taxes have to be paid ; an allusion to the measure taken by Henry VII, who, by his insatiate desire of accumulating money (at his death he left no less than 1.800.000 pounds, which sum was soon dissipated by his successor) did not shrink from impairing coins at his pleasure.<sup>1)</sup> Another proposes a pretence of war that money may be raised to carry it on. This unfair and unconstitutional method had actually been tried by the King in 1492 when he told his subjects that a war with France was inevitable.<sup>2)</sup> The suggestion of a third to fine people for not having observed long-forgotten laws satirises the so-called Statute of Fines passed in 1491 for the exaction of fines for the breach of forgotten tenures, a measure which enlarged the King's income considerably.<sup>3)</sup>

1) Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*. Read, "Exactions of Henry VII", p. 26.

2) Ibid.

3) Ibid. Read, "Exactions of Henry VIII", pp. 26 and 27.



And again Hythloday repeats his rhetorical question: Would a prince heed my words "if I should ryse up, and boldely affirme that all thies counsellles be to the Kyng dishonoure and reproche; and if I shuld declare that the comminalltie chueseth their King for their owne sake and not for his sake; for this intent that through his labour and studie they might al live wealthily, sauuffe from wronges and injuries, and that therfore the Kynge ought to take more care for the wealthe of his people then for his owne wealthe." <sup>1)</sup> Hythloday (More) is absolutely convinced that the King would most certainly not heed his words. And again there follows an enumeration of all the evils to which kings are subject, from which More's inveterate hatred of greed, selfishness and tyranny becomes manifest, for a king who is a rich man himself is a gaoler and not a king. When Hythloday towards the end of Book I hopelessly and bitterly remarks, "And this is all the success I can have at Court, for I must always differ from the rest, and then I shall signify nothing, or if I agree with them, I shall then only help forward their madness" <sup>2)</sup>, we feel that these are the very sentiments of More himself, who was frequently called upon by his King to advise him, but whose words were so seldom listened to that he became sadly disappointed at royal injustice and at the despotism of kings whose only purpose seemed to be to enslave their subjects and to enrich themselves at their expense. Kautsky, with whom I must differ in essential points <sup>3)</sup>, stresses this fact and remarks, "More hasste die Tyrannie, wie nur je ein Engländer sie gehasst hat" <sup>4)</sup>, and he is correct when he observes that More's attack on kings can only then be understood by the present generation, when allowance is made for the time when the *Utopia* was written.

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 37.      2) Ibid. p. 43.

3) See under *Apology*.

4) Karl Kautsky, *Thomas More und seine Utopie*, Stuttgart 1888, p. 169.

So much for the principal historical events More alludes to in Book I ; we shall now pass on to the discussion of a no less important point : the writer's opinion on the social conditions of the time. By a masterful touch More turns the conversation on England, when Hythloday by a chance remark informs his acquaintance that he was once the guest of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, a man "not more honorable for his aucthority, then for his prudence and vertue."<sup>1)</sup> At dinner an English lawyer, commenting upon the punishment of thieves, highly praised "that straye and rygorous justice, which at that tyme was there executed upon fellones, who, as he sayde, were for the moste part twenty hanged together upon one gallowes."<sup>2)</sup> And they all greatly wondered "howe and by what evill lucke it should so come to passe, that theves nevertheles were in every place so ryffe and ranke."<sup>3)</sup> Whereupon Hythloday replied that there was no reason to be surprised at the matter, since the way of punishing thieves was neither just in itself nor good for the public. Great numbers of people are thrown out of employment, who try in vain to find work, and when they cannot provide for their wives and children, you are surprised to hear that they become thieves and murderers. "For great and horryble punyshementes be appoynted for theves, whereas muche provysyon should have bene made, that there were some meanes wherby they might gett theyr lyvyng, so that na man should be drevyn to thys extream necessitye, fyrst to steale, and then to dye."<sup>4)</sup> Here is a large field for investigation. Let us first discuss the causes of the fatal unemployment More refers to. As the first, though not the most important cause he mentions the

Social  
condi-  
tions.  
Causes of  
pauper-  
ism.

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 11. Cardinal Morton, whose household More entered as a child, had a powerful influence on him ; we may safely say that he owed to him that keen political insight which is so distinctive a feature of his writings.

2) Ibid. pp. 11 and 12.

3) Ibid. p. 12.

4) Ibid. p. 12.

wars : soldiers are mutilated who are unfit to follow their old trades or are too old to learn new ones. <sup>1)</sup> Further the number of vagabonds is increased by the great multitude of tenants and servants who are mercilessly dismissed at the death of their lords, nobody in the least caring what becomes of them. Is More with his advanced ideas hinting here at old age pension ? The barbarous and callous treatment of the old and infirm draws forth a bitter invective on the nobles, who are idle as drones and subsist on other men's labour, for Hythloday says, "which can not be content to lyve ydle them selves, like dorres of that whiche other have laboryd for", but they grind their tenants "by reysing their rentes." <sup>2)</sup> After having referred to France with its standing army <sup>3)</sup>, which in Hythloday's opinion is pretty much the same as a pack of idlers, a more pestiferous sort of people than the many idle servants in England <sup>4)</sup>, More mentions the greatest cause of the extreme poverty in his native country and the increase of criminality resulting from it : the conversion of arable land into pasture. Again we have to call in the aid of history to explain this social evil. We have already hinted at the extravagance and luxury of the English Court, then the most splendid and magnificent of the world. Where the King set the example, the nobles followed suit. Greed! the necessary consequence of growing luxury, made them selfish, cruel and rapacious landowners, whose only concern was how to increase their income. Froude illustrates the extravagance of the nobility

Conver-  
sion of  
arable  
land into  
pasture.

1) History has a habit of repeating itself and in this connection it is worthy of note that at the termination of every great war the disbandment of fighting forces has raised the problem of finding suitable civil occupation for those trained in the use of arms. The close of the late war witnessed a situation in many respects identical with the position in More's time and one of the most difficult problems was to find employment for the workless warrior.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 13.

3) France was then the only nation in Europe that could boast of a standing army.

4) With which contrast Plato's opinion on the guardians in his *Republic* !



by giving an estimate of the average income and expenditure of some noblemen in the reign of Henry VIII. <sup>1)</sup> The Duke of Buckingham spent £ 6000.— a year and the income of the Archbishop of Canterbury was rated at the same amount. We can draw our own conclusions, when we consider that in 1914 the Archbishop of Canterbury had an income of £ 10.000.— <sup>2)</sup> and that a penny in 1500 is about half a crown in our times. Where on the other hand the annual rent of a farm was £ 3.— or £ 4.— at the uttermost <sup>3)</sup>, it becomes at once clear that the landowners had to cast about for some means to increase their income. Since agriculture required many hands, they simply converted ploughland into pasturage, dismissed their tenants, turned their houses into sheepfolds and sold the wool to Flanders. This process accounts for the pungent remark “your shepe that were wont to be so myke and tame, and so smal eaters, now be become so greate devowerers and so wylde that they eate up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy and devoure hole fieldes, howses and cities.”<sup>4)</sup> More here puts his finger on the sore. Overwhelming is the evidence that can be adduced to bear out this statement. In 1514 a complaint is made to the Parliament of Henry VIII that “in consequence of the scarcity of food, occasioned by the occupation of land by merchants, clothiers and others, housekeeping had decayed and tillage had turned into pasture”. The petition refers to the “happiness of ancient days (not uncommon in such complaints !) when every man was contented with one farm. Then there was plenty of everything ; and by the winnowing of the corn there were kept at every barn door pigs and poultry, to the comfort of your people in every shire. Now in a town of twenty or thirty dwellings the houses are

1) Froude, *History of England* “Cost of the Royal Establishment”. Vol. I. p. 23.

2) *Whitaker's Almanack*.

3) Froude, *History of England* “Wages and Prices”, Vol. I. p. 15.

4) *Utopia*, pp. 15 and 16.

decayed, the people gone, the churches in ruins, and in many parishes nothing more than a neatherd or a shepherd is to be seen.”<sup>1)</sup> Furthermore complaint is made of the continued scarcity of grain by the conversion of arable land into pasture and the engrossing of farms. “By these means tenements fall to decay, poultry and victuals are diminished, and an infinite number of the King’s subjects for lack of occupation had fallen and daily do fall into idleness and consequently into theft and robberies, and finally by the rigor of the laws of this realm many of them have been put to the execution of death.”<sup>1)</sup>

If Latimer thought that two acres of hemp, sown up and down England “were all too little to hang thy thieves in it”, the prevalence of robbery and theft must have been notorious. And these statements are countenanced by the frequent complaints of highwaymen made by Erasmus, when resident in England, and still more by a letter of Peter Martyr, dated May 19, 1513. “John Stile, the English Ambassador, told him that a band of robbers had attacked the King’s wagons carrying money for the wars, who afterwards took Sanctuary; that the King caught eighty of them before they could escape, and hanged them all.”<sup>2)</sup> Similar petitions against the engrossing of farms are to be found in *Ballads from Manuscripts*, in which there is a general complaint that “many fermes & tenements of husbandry pass ynto the handes and possession of a fewe covaytouse persones.”<sup>3)</sup> It is worth while to illustrate the above by giving a concrete example: the manor of Stretton Baskerville in Warwickshire, belonging to one Twyford.<sup>4)</sup> “Thomas Twyford, having begun the depopulation thereof by decaying four

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1) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I. No. 5727.

2) *Ibid.* No. 4096.

3) *Ballads from Manuscripts*, edited by Frederick J. Furnivall, printed by the Ballad Society, 1868—’72. Vol. I. p. 102.

4) Dagdale’s *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, p. 36. Quoted in *English Social Reformers* by H. de B. Gibbins.

messuages and three cottages whereunto one hundred and sixty acres of arable land belonged, sold it to Henry Smith, gentleman. Which Henry, following that example, enclosed six hundred and forty acres of land more, whereby twelve messuages and four cottages fell to ruin, and eighty persons there inhabiting being employed about tillage and husbandry, were constrained to depart thence and live miserably. By means whereof the church grew to such ruine that it was of no other use than for the shelter of cattle, thus being wretchedly profaned."

Thankful to Mr. Froude for the animated sketch he gives us of England under the reign of Henry VIII, there is ample evidence to prove that his statements must be taken with large qualifications. After having personally consulted the authentic evidence in the *Letters and Papers*, I perfectly agree with Furnivall, when he observes that Froude gives us a one-sided and wrong view of the real facts of the case. The truth is that, instead of being a specially bright time for the labour-classes, it was a very dark period for them. The conversion of tillage into pasture, "sheep devouring men," as More characteristically expressed it, the decay of villages, Henry's extravagance and exactions, caused a moan of distress all over the land. Contemporary evidence should suffice to convince us of the truth of this statement. Granted even that the accounts in the petitions may be exaggerated, entirely without foundation they are certainly not. Licences to beg, and continuous efforts to repress unlicensed beggary indicate the prevalence of beggary, and the efforts of the Legislature to regulate wages and punish vagabondism is conclusive proof that many irregularities did exist. Besides are there no ballads that may be adduced to confirm the complaints in More's *Utopia*? In Furnivall's collection I find a very suggestive one, entitled "Now a Days", from which some lines may be extracted here.

On the turning of cornfields into pasture :



The places that we Right Holy call,  
 Ordeyned for Christyan buriall  
 Off them to make an ox stall.  
 Thes men be wondres wyse,  
 Commons to close and kepe;  
 Poor folk for bred to cry & wepe;  
 Towns pulled downe to pastur shepe  
 This ys the new gyse.<sup>1)</sup>

### On the Decay of towns and men :

The townes go down, the land decayes,  
 Off cornefeylde, playne layes,  
 Gret men makithe now a dayes  
 A shepeeott in the churche.<sup>2)</sup>

### On the hanging of people for stealing from want :

Temporall lordes be almost gone,  
 Howsholdes kepe thei few or none,  
 Which causeth many a goodly mane  
 Tef for to begg his bredd.  
 Yff he stele ffor necessite  
 Ther ys none other remedye  
 But the law will shortlye  
 Hang him all save the hedd.<sup>3)</sup>

Justice compels me to add that King Henry VIII tried to remedy the evil, for in pursuance of the petition of 1514 (see *Letters and Papers* No. 5727) there is an Act of 7<sup>4)</sup> Henry VIII, dated April 22, 1515, providing that "towns decayed shall be re-edified with one year ; all tillage land turned into pasture shall be restored again to tillage." The King may have meant well, but the results were most unsatisfactory, for eighteen years later (1533) a new Act was passed enforcing measures against "Evils of the Excess of Land employed in Pasture instead of tillage," providing that "no man

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1) *Ballads from Manuscripts*, p. 97.

2) *Ibid.* p. 97.

3) *Ibid.* p. 95.

4) The seventh year of the reign of.

shall keep above two thousand sheep. Penalty 3 sh. 4 d. per sheep." <sup>1)</sup>

Such were briefly the causes of pauperism upon which Hythloday commented. And all this could be remedied *not* by hanging the wretched people that had been turned out of doors, but by stopping the enclosures. "Suffer not thies ryche men to bye up all, to ingrosse and forstalle and with theyr monopolye to kepe the market alone as please them. Let not so manye be brought up in ydlenes; let husbandrye and tyllage be restored agayne; let clothe workynge be renewed, that there maye be honest labours for thys ydell sorte to passe theyre tyme in profytablye, whyche hytherto other pover-tye hathe caused to be theves, or elles nowe be other vagabondes, or ydell servinge men, and shortelye wylbe theves." <sup>2)</sup> Here in this one sentence More gives us a perfect idea of the social and economical distress, corroborated by contemporary, authentic documents. Speaking of the rich men who buy up all and who "with theyr monopolye kepe the market alone as please them," More stresses an economical problem of great importance, for the decrease of arable land, the monopolization of land by a few, necessarily entailed a rise in prices. Dr. Friedrich Kleinwächter points to this phenomenon in *Die Staatsromane*, when he says, "Die Verminderung der Aecker bewirkt ferner eine Vertheuerung des Getreides. Gleichzeitig mit dem Getreide steigt aber auch das Fleisch im Preise, weil auch der Besitz der Vieh heerden in den Händen weniger grosser Grundeigenthümer concentrirt welche so dann den Consumenten die Preise dictiren und die nothwendige Folge hievon ist eine weitere Zunahme der Noth und der Verbrechen." <sup>3)</sup> The evil of monopolization is further humorously illustrated in "Syx olde Proverbes." <sup>4)</sup>

1) *Ballads from Manuscripts*, Vol. I. p. 102.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, pp. 18 and 19.

3) Dr. Friedrich Kleinwächter, *Die Staatsromane*, p. 42.

4) In the Lambeth Library, quoted in *Ballads from Manuscripts*, p. 23.

The more shepe, the dearer is the wool  
 The more shepe, the dearer is the motton  
 The more shepe, the dearer is the beffe  
 The more shepe, the dearer is the corne  
 The more shepe, the skanter is the whit meate (flesh of cattle)  
 The more shepe, the fewer eggs for a penny.

In conclusion I may give a few details about the fees and wages paid to the servants of the Crown and others, in proof of the deplorable condition of the working classes. Particulars I borrow from the *Letters and Papers*. Turning to the army we find that the daily pay of a spearman was 1 sh. 6 d.; an archer 8 d.; an ordinary soldier 6 d.<sup>1)</sup> It is important to contrast these payments with the wages of mechanics and ordinary labourers. According to the Statute 6<sup>2)</sup> Henry VIII, the day's work, from the middle of March to the middle of September, began before 5 in the morning and ended between 7 and 8 in the evening. During the other months it began with "the springing of the day" and lasted till night; and during these months no sleep in the day was allowed. The labourers had half an hour for breakfast, an hour and a half in the summer months for dinner, and half an hour less in the dark months. So practically the day's work consisted of 12 hours, with which may be compared the 8 hours' day of modern times! Superior workmen, or freemasons, bricklayers, plumbers, joiners had in the long months 6 d. a day, in the short 5 d., if on board wages 4 d. and 3 d.<sup>3)</sup> The ordinary agricultural labourer was paid from Easter to Michaelmas 4 d. without meat and drink, and 2 d. with, and the other part of the year 1½ d. with his board.<sup>4)</sup> These data require no comment, we may add that this rate of wages continued with little alteration throughout the reign of Henry VIII. In the Hampton

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1) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I. Pref. CIX; consult letter No. 4375. War in Scotland

2) Sixth year of his reign.

3) The general rate of board wages being 1 sh. a week.

4) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I. Preface CXII.



Court accounts of 1546, even in the winter months superior carpenters were paid 8 d., 7 d. and 6 d. a day ; common labourers 4 d., some  $4\frac{1}{2}$  d. <sup>1)</sup> So, whereas after the Peasants' Revolt the condition of labour was on the whole, materially improved — the revolt tended to hasten the abolition of serfdom and to create in its stead a free class of tenant-farmers — the period of comparative prosperity (the "Golden Age of the English Labourer") was rudely put an end to by the introduction of this new industry of sheep-farming. And it is this measure together with its most disastrous effects upon the social and economical conditions of the lower classes to which More devotes an important part of his work.

So much for the causes of the distress of the rural population ; Criminal  
Law. a few words must now be said about the second part of Hythlodæ's statement : the cruelty of the law. A glance at history suffices to prove that also in this connection More's remarks are in every respect correct. For beggary the English law had no mercy, and the punishment for this offence was altogether out of proportion to the nature of the crime. Anyone found begging was whipped "for two days together" ; if caught for a second time he was scourged two days, put in the pillory and had his right ear cut off. <sup>2)</sup> The remark by one of the lawyers at Cardinal Morton's (*Utopia*, Bk. I.) is borne out by history, for Froude adds, "It would scarcely have been expected that this Act would have failed for want of severity in its penalties, yet five years later these penalties were enhanced to a degree which has given a bloody name in the history of English law." It would lead us too far to quote the provisions of the new Act in full, suffice it to say that "an able-bodied man to be caught a third time begging, was held a crime deserving death." For this offence 72000 criminals were executed

1) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. I. Preface CXII.

2) For full particulars see Froude's *History* "The English criminal laws" (Vol. II. Ch. XVI).

in England during the reign of Henry VIII — all the more dreadful when we consider that the population at the time of the Armada (1588) was estimated at something under five millions.<sup>1)</sup> In reply to the Cardinal's question what punishment Hythloday would suggest, the latter refers to the country of the Polylerites, where the thieves have to make restitution to the owner, and go free; only if they are idle, they are whipped. "They that refuse labour, or goo slowly and slacly to there woorke, be not only tied in cheynes, but also pricked forward with stripes."<sup>2)</sup> Here also More's hatred of idleness becomes manifest: for idleness was, in his opinion, one of the chief causes of many social evils.<sup>3)</sup>

About  
monaste-  
ries.

The fate of beggars and vagrants was aggravated by the callousness of the monks. Charity had been a special virtue of the monasteries, but as these religious houses became more and more careless in their sacred duties and would no longer give shelter to vagabonds, the number of paupers multiplied. In his partiality for the King, Froude tries to explain that the un-christian conduct of the monasteries led to their dissolution, goes so far as to maintain that by this suppression the number of unemployed decreased, for "the lands bequeathed for the benefit of the poor were re-applied under altered forms to their intention."<sup>4)</sup>

Kautsky, who is diametrically opposed to Froude, and who is no friend of Henry VIII, points out that the King's measures led even to an increase of the number of idlers. "Das Proletariat wurde

1) Froude's *History* See chapter "The Population of England in the 16th century."

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 23.

3) More's hatred of this vice also appears from his other works. See among others his *Apology* (in *The English Workes*) in which he blames an imaginary husband for allowing his wife "to bee to much ydle" (Cap. XIII. § C. p. 873), and further his remarks on beggars. If you give a beggar alms "make him worke therfore in your gardein, lest he should by your almes live and ware a loiterer". (Cap. XXX. § D. p. 895).

4) Froude's *History* "The Vagrant Act" (Vol. II. p. 277).

noch vermehrt durch die Aufhebung der Klöster." <sup>1)</sup> That More himself is absolutely of the same opinion, is manifest from the conversation between the friar and the jester at Cardinal Morton's table, when the former asks what has to be done with "such as he." "Whie," quod the jester, "that is doon all redy. For mi lord him selfe set a very good ordre for yow, when he decreed that vagaboundes should be kept strayt, and set to worke, for yow be the greatest and veriest vagaboundes that be" <sup>2)</sup> and Hythloday adds that the Cardinal was not ill-pleased at this repartee. This subtle remark is full of meaning, for it reflects More's own opinion about the clergy of his time. The Cardinal was not ill-pleased at the sally of his jester. No wonder. The ecclesiastics had been shamefully remiss in the fulfilment of their duties. Priests spent their time in hawking and hunting, in lounging at taverns, in the dissolute enjoyment of the world, and it was Cardinal Morton who had raised his voice against the depravity of the priests by sending a circular among the clergy of his province, exhorting them to general amendment. <sup>3)</sup> But in spite of the Cardinal's rebukes and remonstrances, profligacy increased and pluralities multiplied. Where bishops accumulated sees, and unable to attend to all, attended to none, the lower clergy readily followed suit and often held as many as eight benefices. <sup>4)</sup>

"I would ask you a strange question," Latimer once said to a ring of Bishops, "who is the most diligent prelate in all England that passeth all the rest in doing of his office? I will tell you. It is the Devil. Therefore you unpreaching prelates, learn of the Devil to be diligent in your office." <sup>5)</sup> Nor was the general opinion about the clergy more favourable than that of Morton and Latimer; it

The  
Clergy.

1) Kautsky, *Thomas More und seine Utopie*, pp. 28 and 154.

2) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 28.

3) Froude's *History* about "The Condition of the Church." (Vol. I. p. 59).

4) This abuse gave rise to the Statute against Pluralities, providing that Pluralities were not permitted with benefices above the yearly value of eight pounds.

5) John Richard Green, *A short History of the English People*, p. 353.



found utterance in such popular doggerels as Roy's *Satire against the Clergy* of 1528, in which Roy exposes the corruption of the monasteries and the vices of the monks.

Their cloysters are the devils mewes  
Farre worse than any stewes. <sup>1)</sup>

In the preceding pages I have tried to throw some light on the political and social conditions of England in the beginning of the 16th century to all of which allusions have been made in Book I of the *Utopia*: the arbitrary rule of monarchs, their utter indifference about the well-being of their subjects, the pernicious influence of their counsellors, agreed on one point only: to flatter their sovereigns with a view to promoting their own interests; the glaring contrast between the extravagant luxury of the rich and the frightful privations of the poor; the monopolization of land and its fatal consequences, the stringent and merciless laws tending to increase criminality instead of preventing it; the immorality of the clergy.

I shall now proceed to a discussion of Book II, in which, by way of contrast, an ideal commonwealth is described, with perfect regulations and institutions, presenting in every respect a very favourable and striking contrast with the picture of More's native country.

About  
towns.

After having given a short historical sketch of the island of Utopia <sup>2)</sup>, Hythloday draws our attention to its towns. There are fifty-four, which are all modelled on the capital Amaurot. Churton Collins refers to Harrison, who, in his *Description of England* (ed. Furnivall, pp. 96-97) gives the number of English counties as fifty-three, but More may have reckoned the City as a county in itself, and so made up his number. Amaurot has streets "twenty fote brode" and very convenient for all carriages.

1) *Ballads from Manuscripts*, p. 82.

2) See preceding chapter for comparison between Atlantis and Utopia.

It appeared from records that "the howses in the beginning were verye lowe, and lyke homelye cotages, or poore shepparde howses, made of every rude piece of woode, with mudde walles and roofes thatched over with straw..... But nowe the howses be curiously builded, after a gorgiouse and gallaunt sort, with III storries one over another, and the walles be made of brycke or plaster;"<sup>1)</sup> and somewhat further on, "They kepe the wynde out of their windowes with glasse, for it is there much used." There can be no doubt that More, in his description of the capital referred to London such as it was and such as he would like it to be, and no one can fail to notice that More is giving a truthful sketch of the deplorable condition of the houses in the 16th century. Froude says, "Houses are fallen down and decayed and do lie as desolate and vacant grounds, replenished with much uncleanness and filth, with pits and vaults lying open and uncovered to the great peril and danger of the inhabitants,"<sup>2)</sup> with which compare *Letters and Papers*, Pref. CCIX. "The floors are covered with rushes, occasionally removed, but so imperfectly that the bottom layer is left undisturbed, sometimes for twenty years, harbouring expectoration; ale-dropping, scraps of fish and other abominations not fit to be mentioned." Churton Collins is of opinion that during his stay in Flanders, More's attention had been drawn to the deficiencies of English towns. I believe this is too sweeping an assertion. The Dutch towns may have looked nicer and cleaner than the English, but the contrast cannot have been so striking as to justify Collins's remark. Nor have I found in More's correspondence during the period any allusion that could confirm this supposition. For any comparison I would refer to the instructive articles on Dutch towns by Professor Blok<sup>3)</sup> and especially by the

About the  
houses.

1) *Utopia*, p. 56.

2) Froude's *History "The Decline of Towns"*, Vol. I Ch. I. p. 65.

3) Prof. Dr. P. J. Blok, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk*, Leiden, 1912, Dl. I. Steden als woonplaatsen.

Sanitary  
arrange-  
ments.

Florentine nobleman Guicciardini, <sup>1)</sup> who visited the Low Countries in the beginning of the 16th century and whose studies on town planning became the basis of all further investigations. I am rather inclined to believe that More's description of Amaurot with its narrow streets and filthy houses such as it was about "seventeen hundred and sixty years ago," may safely be applied to the state and condition of towns in the different countries of Europe in More's time. The picture he gives of the modern capital with its excellent sanitary arrangements proves again that More as a reformer was far in advance of his time and it is a eulogium on his keen and inventive spirit that many of his suggestions are now being put in practice, such as the sanitary measures taken to prevent the spreading of contagious diseases applied in his *Utopia* to the slaughter-houses, where "the fylthynes and ordure is clene washed awaye in the running ryver, without the cytie." <sup>2)</sup> Nor may anything that is foul or unclean be brought into the towns "least the ayre, by the stenche therof infected and corrupte, shoulde cause pestilente diseases." <sup>3)</sup> The mention of contagious diseases leads him to speak of arrangements for the sick, and also in this connection More makes several suggestions not followed up till our own times, for example his wise remark that "they which were taken and holden with contagious diseases suche as be wonte by infection to crepe from one to an other, myght be laid a part farre from the company of the rest." <sup>4)</sup> In *Utopia* there are four hospitals in every town — a sufficient number, as none of their cities may contain above six thousand families — so that they can lodge the patients conveniently. Here again More is glancing at the London of his time, for in the 16th century there was one hospital (in our sense of the term at least): St Bartholo-

1) Ludovicus Guicciardini, *Belgium dat is Nederlandt ofte Beschrijvingh desselviger Provincien ende Steden*, 1648. Read: "Beschrijvingh van Antwerpen."

2) *Utopia*, p. 68.

3) *Ibid.* p. 68.

4) *Ibid.* p. 69.



mew's, which, however, appeared to be wholly inadequate for the purpose.

More himself was never to witness any change for the better, and it was not before 1666, after the great fire of London, that the streets were widened and wooden houses were replaced by brick ones. "The fire of London," says Hume <sup>1)</sup>, "though at that time a great calamity, has proved in the issue beneficial to the city and the kingdom." The city was rebuilt in a very little time, and care was taken to make the streets wider and more regular than before. It was forbidden to make use of lath and timber. But no attempt was made at any artisticity, which, as Hume says, "would have greatly contributed to the embellishment of the city." <sup>2)</sup> Great advantages, however, have resulted from the alteration, though not carried to the full length, for London became much more healthy after the fire, and the plague, which used to break out with great fury twice or thrice every, century.... has scarcely ever appeared since that calamity." <sup>3)</sup>

After this rather minute description of the towns in Utopia, there follows an account of their government and their magistrates, which affords More once more an opportunity of expressing his intense hatred of tyranny. For in Utopia, the prince is for life, but he is removable on suspicion of a design to enslave his people. Indeed, this chapter (the third of the second Book) is a kind of guide and corrective for sovereigns.

About magistrates and family-life.

More's ideas about family-life were discussed in the preceding chapter. In Utopia fathers and grandfathers, sons and daughters-in-law made one family, and lived under the same roof, like More's

1) David Hume, *The History of England*, Vol. III. p. 396.

2) This remark is quite justified. See *News from Nowhere*, in which William Morris — poet and artist — makes one of his characters say, "In the 19th century the houses were vulgar and ugly." (p. 216).

3) For fires in London see also John Stow, *London under Elizabeth*, Morley edition, London, 1890, pp. 53 and 109.

own family at Chelsea. In this respect no philosopher ever exemplified his own precepts more perfectly than More. And if we may accept the repeated and uniform assurances of his contemporaries, his own practice must have been the noblest proof of the sound wisdom of his theory. The observations concerning the education of children, their behaviour at table, the respect due to their parents and elders, faithfully reflect More's own ideas on this point, and the passage, "Thus old men are honoured with a particular respect, so that the reverence due to them might restrain the younger from all indecent words and gestures," cannot be read often enough by those would-be pedagogues of the present generation who do not sufficiently insist on decent manners in their pupils, in an age that is utterly deficient in the observation of good manners.

Occupations. The 6 hours' day.

— The principal function of the magistrates in Utopia is to see that no man is idle, and that everybody is usefully employed, which leads to a discussion of the principal occupations and manners of life. That among the Utopians agriculture is considered by far the most important occupation, is superfluous to state, since in More's time it was made nothing of. "Husbandrye is a science common to them all in generall, both men and wome: wherein they be all experte and cunnyng. In thys they be all instructe even from their youth." <sup>1)</sup> But other useful occupations are not neglected either, for every man has also to learn a trade and the mention of these trades gives More an opportunity of dealing some very hard blows at the dreadful conditions of the labour classes in England by depicting in contrast the treatment of artisans and labourers in Utopia. The description of these labour-conditions aims so directly at the Statutes of Labour under Henry VIII that I wonder More had the courage to insert it. The Utopians may follow the trade they like best and "do not wear themselves out

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1) *Utopia*, p. 95.

with perpetual toil from morning till night, as if they were beasts of burden, which, as it is indeed a heavy slavery, so it is everywhere the common course of life amongst all mechanics except the Utopians." <sup>1)</sup> They have only to work six hours a day, the rest of the time being left to every man's discretion, provided "they do not abuse that interval to luxury and idleness." Fully aware that these particulars about the working-hours would be the cause of much merriment, More quickly explains that this ideal could only be realised if *all* people could be prevailed upon to work and not be idle and if the work they were engaged upon was useful. What contemporaries looked upon as a farce, came to be fulfilled in modern times. When More suggested the six hours' day, he was casting a prophetic glance into the future: the Eight Hours-Bill was actually passed <sup>2)</sup>, (the workmen having demanded the Utopian six hours' day) and when in his *Utopia* he advocates public lectures for the education of the people, we see his ideas embodied in the University Extension Movement. It has been thought curious that in his enumeration of idle people, More also includes women, whereas in his time house-work, mostly done by women, was a very important item. Evidently, according to More, any woman was idle, who did not, like his daughters, receive a strictly classical education. <sup>3)</sup> That last not least the unemployment question has not been solved in our days, appears clearly enough from the census of 1881 (for England and Wales) with its 988718 paupers <sup>4)</sup>, not to speak of the most critical situation of recent times.

As a logical and necessary consequence of More's insistence on

1) See Labour Statute under Henry VIII on p. 124.

2) About the evil consequences of this Act (how it necessitates an increase of hands with its subsequent financial losses), see the interesting article "La loi de huit heures" in the *Revue des Deux mondes* du 1er février 1922 by Raphael Georges Lévy, p. 604.

3) Compare what was said about education of women under Renaissance.

4) The census of 1881 by Thomas Illingworth in *English Social Reformers*, p. 51.



Satire on  
Luxury.

useful work, it is obvious that in Utopia everything is valued in proportion to its use. Therefore its inhabitants show a great contempt for precious metals and gems. In Utopia "greate cheynes, fetters and gives wherein they tye their bondmen"<sup>1)</sup> are made of gold and silver; an ear-ring of gold being a badge of infamy: "who so ever for any offence be infamed, by their eares hange ringes of golde." But nowhere is the vice of extravagance held up to greater ridicule than in the unique description of the ambassadors of the Anemolians, who, in their costly attires, thought they were making a deep impression upon the population, not knowing that all the time they were looked upon as bondsmen or fools. "You might have seen the children, who were grown big enough to despise their playthings or who had thrown away their jewels cry out to their mothers, 'Loke, mother, how great a lubbor doth yet were peerles and pretious stoones, as though he were a litel child still', while their mothers innocently replied, 'Peace, sone, I thynk he be some of the Ambassadors fooles.'"<sup>2)</sup> In this humorous part More not only satirised the luxury and extravagance of the higher classes in general, but also the ostentatious pomp in dress common in his time.

About the  
internal  
condi-  
tions  
(roads &c)

In his many official functions (among others as Commissioner of Sewers and as Under-Sheriff of London, which post he held in 1510, that is before he designed his *Utopia*) More must have been fully acquainted with the deplorable state of the roads and its disastrous effect upon trade and industry, and his thoughts on this subject we find reflected in his treatment of the internal arrangements in his romance. In More's time the roads were for the greater part of the year impassable on account of the many rains. The coaches often stuck fast in the mud, so that a team of oxen had to be produced from some neighbouring farm to tug them out of the slough, and

1) *Utopia*, p. 77.

2) *Ibid.* p. 80.

on the best roads the ruts were so deep, the descents so precipitous that the coaches were either overturned or sank up to their axles in the ruts. Add to this that the roads were infested by highwaymen, and we get some idea of the inconveniences of travelling in the period under discussion. Nor was this all. As a consequence of the bad and imperfect means of communication, the markets were at times inaccessible, so that, whereas in one place there was abundance of food, in another, not ten miles distant, people were starving for want of it. <sup>1)</sup> Now in Utopia, where everything is done to promote the happiness and the welfare of the subjects, the roads are kept in excellent repair and the distance between two towns is never "above one dayes journeye a fote" <sup>2)</sup>, and to prevent famine, the cause of many pestilent diseases, the Great Council at Amaurot has to examine what towns abound in provisions, and what are in want of them, so that according to their plenty or scarcity, they supply or are supplied from one another. More evidently aims at the most primitive form of commerce, and wants to go back to the barter-system of the Phoenicians, but in an idealised form. Only when the Utopians have thus taken care of their whole country and laid up stores for two years, they order an exportation of the overplus. In these remarks More is tacitly satirising the state of things in England, where foodstuffs were simply sold to the highest bidder (monopolization of trade by the big landowners), not the slightest attempt being made to regulate the food-supply. <sup>3)</sup> To facilitate the calculations and to secure a regular supply, it is ordained in Utopia that no city shall contain more than six thousand families. Here is a transition to another topic of no slight interest: that of

Measures  
for the  
preven-  
tion of  
famine.

1) Macaulay's *History of England*. "State of England". Vol. I.

2) *Utopia*, p. 50.

3) That nations in general never paid much attention to this most important problem, became manifest in the recent war, when most countries of Europe did not in the least know how much corn they could grow, and were not able to state approximately how long their stock would last them.

Over-  
popula-  
tion.

over-population. More was perhaps the first to understand that what is called over-population only means over-population of a certain district and that the simple remedy against this evil is : transference from one locality to another. <sup>1)</sup> All this he exemplifies in his work, for among the Utopians this method is applied with great success, and emigration is only then resorted to, when there is a general increase over the whole island. If the neighbouring states refuse to admit the immigrants from Utopia, they consider this refusal as a just cause for war, "since every man has by the law of nature a right to such a waste portion of the earth as is necessary for his subsistence." <sup>2)</sup>

On  
marriage.

In the preceding chapter we hinted at a quaint custom among the Utopians. In Utopia bride and bridegroom are presented naked to one another, for it would be wrong that in the choice of a wife, on which depends the happiness or unhappiness of the rest of his life, a man should venture upon trust and only see about a hand's breadth of the face, all the rest of the body being covered, under which there may lie hid what may be contagious as well as loathsome. (Bk. II. Ch. VII.) Now this passage has, as far as I know, escaped the attention of annotators, and yet I consider it highly remarkable, because it is of actual interest and in every respect applicable to our times ; many articles having recently appeared in the newspapers on the necessity of medical examination before marriage. <sup>3)</sup> Hythloday's remarks are worth our attention. Might not his words have a bearing on the state of health in More's own times ? and might not the passage about the strict observance

1) With which compare the effective method suggested by Scrooge in the *Christmas Carol*. (Stave I) "If they (indigent people) would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

2) See *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. V.

3) In the evening paper of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* of Friday January 5, 1923, there appeared an article on "Medical examination before marriage", in which the writer observes, "The thought was not new ; More suggested it long ago in his *Utopia*." (See "Medische Kroniek.")



of the marriage-ceremonies be meant as an allusion to some contagious disease hitherto unknown? The writer says, "All the rest of the body being covered, under which there may lie hid what may be contagious as well as loathsome"; the words contagious and loathsome especially being very suggestive. Accordingly I made inquiries which led to the following conclusion: in the passage on matrimony More is making a direct reference to a dreadful contagious disease which had been discovered a few years before the appearance of the Utopia; viz. syphilis. The chief authority on which I base this statement is: Robert W. Taylor, clinical professor, New York, from whose work, entitled *The Pathology and Treatment of Venereal Diseases* I quote the following passages. "The first authentic account of syphilis is given by medical writers about the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. These writers, who were familiar with the chancroidal ulcer, describe syphilis as the *morbus Gallicus*, and the "morbus novus et inauditus", and a few lines further on (page 20), "The epidemic of syphilis which stands out so boldly in medical history occurred about the time (the latter part of the year 1494) when Charles VIII, King of France, with a large army invaded Italy with the intent of taking possession of the kingdom of Naples, which he claimed by right of inheritance. Charles left Rome on his way to Naples, January 28, and reached the latter city February 21, 1495. After a time the Neapolitans revolted against the authority of Charles, and aided by a Spanish army under the command of Gonsalos of Cordova, they endeavoured to drive the French out of Italy. There were then three armies encamped near Naples, and about this time the fearful epidemic broke out. It is not definitely established that the disease first appeared among the troops, but they certainly were attacked, and were one of the means of conveying the disease into other countries. There is ample

evidence to prove that within a few years the disease had spread over the greater part of Europe. Thus we find that syphilis was by the Neapolitans called the *morbus Gallicus*, by the French *mal de Naples*.<sup>1)</sup> Taylor then observes that it seems strange that such a strikingly well marked disease should thus break forth in epidemic form within a quite restricted area of territory. "Yet the fact remains that it was unknown in Europe prior to the last decade of the fifteenth century." Nobody can in good faith deny that More did not take a keen interest in social and economical questions, and it can hardly be supposed that More should have been ignorant of the spreading of the disease or that he should have considered it of too slight importance to mention it. We may safely assume that his intimate friend Dr. Linacre, the court physician with whom he often conversed on medical topics, informed him of the interesting discovery. The supposition that contemporaries themselves might not have been aware that a new disease had made its appearance, is unfounded for this reason that "medical men who had been familiar with the chancroid and gonorrhoea prior to the year 1494 had very clear ideas as to their nature, and they knew perfectly well that they were not in any way related to the new disease."<sup>2)</sup> The facts and the circumstances given by Taylor go very far to confirm my supposition — undoubtedly they induced More to make some allusion to it in his chapter on "wedlock." Lupton has a different opinion on the subject and is inclined to believe that the matrimonial bartering of mere infants may have roused the spirit of Democritus in More and suggested to him, in mocking humour, the custom by which the intending bride and bridegroom in Utopia might at least enter into their contract with eyes open.<sup>3)</sup> He refers especially to

1) A rather humorous illustration of "the pot calling the kettle black."


2) See R. W. Taylor, *the Pathology and Treatment of Venereal Diseases*, New-York, 1895. p. 20.

3) Lupton's edition of the *Utopia*, Clarendon Press, 1895, Introduction, p. XXXIII.

the betrothal of royal personages and the selfish and unscrupulous arrangements often made for the marriage of young princes. Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII, was little more than a year old, when he was betrothed to Catherine of Aragon, who was just nine months older. This explanation seems to me unsatisfactory, for, if More really hinted here at the coupling of young children, I fail to see why he should, in this connection, make any reference to contagious and loathsome diseases.

“Corruptissima republica, plurimae leges,” said Tacitus, and the truthfulness of this statement was exemplified in More’s time. The number of Acts passed in the reign of Henry VIII was incredible, and as the measures taken to remedy social evils, were, on the whole, unsuccessful, one Act followed another in quick succession.<sup>1)</sup> “Laws are not necessary when every man knows his duty,” Hythloday says, “therefore very few do suffice.”<sup>2)</sup> The Utopians very much condemn other nations whose laws, together with the commentaries on them, swell up to so many volumes. After some gibes on the many obscure and ambiguous passages in many Acts<sup>3)</sup>, (in which no doubt reference is made to More’s personal legal experiences), there follows a bitter satire on the uselessness of leagues with other nations. Rightly does Hythloday observe that, if the common ties of humanity do not knit men together, the faith of promises will have no great effect, in which opinion the Utopians are all the more confirmed when they see nations around them which are no strict observers of leagues and treaties<sup>4)</sup>; More adding sarcastically, “the more and holier ceremonies the league is knytte up with, the sooner it is broken.”<sup>4)</sup> To us, who have

About  
leagues  
and  
treaties.  
(Foreign  
Policy).



1) Froude's *History*. See chapter on “English Poor Laws”.

2) *Utopia*, Bk. II Ch. VII, p. 105.

3) With which compare: Thomas Hobbes on “Good Laws.” (Thomas Hobbes’ *works*, Vol. III. *Of Commonwealth*, p. 336).

4) *Utopia*, Bk. II, Ch. VII, p. 108.



On  
warfare.

experienced that treaties are but worthless scraps of papier, these words are significant, even more so the writer's remarks on war and warfare. More had seen the horrors of wars, which, as far as his own country was concerned, were mostly caused by the recklessness of a vain sovereign and as a direct condemnation both of the King and his insatiable desire of military glory, Hythloday says, "They cownte nothings so much against glorie, as glory gotten in warre."<sup>1</sup>) In our days when the horrors of the recent war are still fresh in our minds, when its ruinous effects upon civilization are keenly felt, when its degenerating and demoralizing influences upon society are clearly visible, we cannot help sympathising with More's loud outcry against war, which the Utopians detest as a brutal occupation and which, to the reproach of human nature, is more practised by men than by any sort of beasts. If the Utopians are dragged into a war, they hire soldiers from other countries rather than sacrifice their own men. In the description of these mercenary troops (the Zapolites) there is a not very flattering allusion to the Swiss, who, shortly before the publication of the *Utopia*, had made themselves very unpopular by their conduct in the Italian wars, when they had practically sold themselves to the highest bidder: in the beginning of the war fighting for France (1500-1512) and afterwards joining the Italians. The compliment More pays them as expert archers is well-deserved.<sup>2</sup>)

This summary has extended further than I anticipated. Yet this brief sketch was necessary to establish More's position as an exponent of the social, economical and political evils under which Europe in general, and England in particular suffered. The endless wars, the faithless leagues, the military expenditure, the money and time wasted upon means of defence to the neglect of social improvement, trains of idle serving-men, broken and disabled soldiers turning

1) *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VIII, p. 110.

2) See chapter on "Military training" in Froude's *History of England*. Vol. I. p. 40.

to theft for lack of employment, labour disarranged, husbandry broken up, towns, villages and hamlets depopulated to feed sheep, the agricultural labourer turned adrift, to starve, no poor-houses, very few hospitals, though contagious diseases raged through the land, the poor left to perish as paupers by the side of the ditches, filling the air with fever and pestilence, houses never swept or ventilated, no adequate supply of water for cleanliness or health, penal laws stringently enforced, the innocent often punished, justice proud of its executions, and wondering that theft multiplied faster than the gibbet.

In short who wishes to see society as it was in the beginning of the 16th century, let him read the *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More, and he will not be disappointed. Whether its author was equally successful in his suggestions to ameliorate the deplorable conditions, is a matter open to a good deal of criticism. Let us consider this point in the next chapter.

What me worry?

$$\begin{array}{r} 56 \\ \times 25 \\ \hline 280 \\ 1120 \\ \hline 1400 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 45 \\ 6 \end{array}$$

$$1425$$

$$\frac{14}{25}$$

$$\frac{66}{52}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 25 \quad 5'2 \quad \times 100 \\ \hline 2500 \\ 1040 \\ \hline 2540 \end{array}$$

## CHAPTER VI.

### FURTHER REMARKS ON THE UTOPIA.

#### INCONGRUITIES - INCONSISTENCIES.

In his *Utopia* More develops a political system which, in theory, is in many respects admirable and highly attractive, but which, in practice, will turn out to be a beautiful dream, a chimera only. Like all his imitators, More makes the obvious mistake that he has created his model republic for saints and not for human creatures. As far as I know, Plato is the only one who does not shut his eyes to human faults and who makes a point of showing to us that a commonwealth can only then be called ideal, when its members have reached a stage of perfection. But even supposing that the Utopian system of Government could be realised at all, it is highly improbable that people, under this *régime* would feel happy and contented. The Utopians have everything in common: their houses, their property, their meals, and are governed on the principles of equality, which comes practically to this that the members of the community, not one excepted, have to conform to a uniform and elaborate system of rules and regulations. Individual liberty cannot be tolerated in a State in which the inhabitants enjoy equal rights and in which the regulations meant for all are to be strictly kept and rigidly enforced. How dull, how monotonous such a life must be! How many would revolt from the iron discipline to which they are subjected! In Utopia the chief occupation is agriculture; from this employment no person is exempt. Whether the individual has quite different tastes or inclinations is not for a moment con-



considered ; it is taken for granted that the people will apply themselves to their task readily and gladly. Altogether the farmer occupies a pre-eminent and privileged position. This cannot be said of quite a different class of people : the artists, who receive but scanty notice. The question arises whether this group could exist at all in a Utopian State. The dull routine of the daily task would be sure to kill artistic inspiration. An artist cannot create at command ; besides his work would not be appreciated, for luxury being excluded from this commonwealth, art, as a necessary consequence, would be excluded as well. We are told that plates, basins and dishes are made of clay or glass, that they are "curiouslye and properlie made" <sup>1)</sup>, but not a word is said about sculpture and painting, far less of the sculptor or the painter. Pearls and precious stones are the toys of the children, gold is used for fetters of criminals. In such a State the work of an artist would find little encouragement. Luxury is killed and with it a feeling for the artistic. To the agricultural class More assigns just as important a position as Plato to his soldier-class, but for the artist there is no room in his State. The only art cultivated is music, which, among the Utopians, exercises its influence in connection with their church services, their public banquets and during their hours of relaxation. This lack of appreciation strikes us all the more in a man who was not blind to the ennobling influence of art on the human soul. More's relation with Holbein gives him a place in the history of art ; Holbein stayed with him at Chelsea for three years, and returned his hospitality by painting portraits of him and his family. <sup>2)</sup>

About the  
artist.

Also in other respects the Utopians are not entirely free from

1) *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VI. p. 77.

2) In the *Dictionary of National Biography* it says that More had strong artistic tastes. He filled his house with curious furniture and plate. He was fond of music, and according to Richard Pace, he induced his wife, who had no claims to culture, to learn the flute with him. Of this, however, I can find no corroboration in contemporary writings.

About  
bondsmen.

usages which seem incompatible with a model republic. The introduction of bondsmen <sup>1)</sup> is not quite consistent with Utopian views about equality and liberty. We may attempt some explanation, but we shall find it rather hard to prove that bondsmen can be tolerated in a perfect community, their very presence reflecting disgrace and dishonour upon their fellowmen who do not feel ashamed to keep them in a state of abject dependence. Is it possible that we are to consider this part of the *Utopia* as a fierce satire on the deplorable condition of England, and does More want to imply that slavery in Utopia is to be preferred to so-called liberty in England? Are we thus to interpret Hythloday's words when he says that life is altogether so delightful in Utopia that foreigners prefer to be slaves to being freemen in their own country? If so, More's cynicism almost equals Swift's in the fourth Book of his *Gulliver's Travels*. Communists, who, despite the fact that slavery and monarchy are essential features of the Utopian commonwealth, have accepted it as their textbook, fail, in my opinion, in their endeavours to reconcile these essential points to their fundamental principles of communism. Kautsky remarks that More had to find a somewhat satisfactory solution of a most awkward problem: that of menial service. Who had to do the dirty and filthy work in the slaughter-houses? This disagreeable task was assigned to slaves. Kautsky says, "Es gab unter diesen unangenehmen Arbeiten solche, die man einem frommen Manne absolut nicht zumuthen konnte, z. B. das Schlachten von Thieren, Arbeiten, die den Menschen der sie betrieb, brutalisiren mussten. More wünschte die Utopier davon fern zu halten. Aber die Arbeiten mussten gethan werden. In dieser Verlegenheit, wurde More gezwungen, sich selbst untreu zu werden und die Zwangarbeit für eine Klasse der Bewohner Utopiens bestehen zu lassen." <sup>2)</sup> In this connection it is worth while

1) *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VII.

2) Kautsky, *Thomas More und seine Utopie*, p. 277.

to inquire how other Utopists have solved the difficult problem of menial labour. A more satisfactory solution is given by Bellamy in his popular novel *Looking Backward*. As idleness is the root of all evil (and in this respect the two social reformers perfectly agree), Bellamy points out that the *State* ought to teach its subjects that any employment is better than none, and that therefore people must be made to understand that no work — as long as it is useful and necessary — ought to be despised. "The word menial is obsolete now" (in the year 2000), says one of the characters in the novel, "but if I understand rightly, it applied to persons who performed particularly disagreeable and unpleasant tasks for others and carried with it an implication of contempt. This is unfair," and the speaker rather wittily remarks, "If we accept a service from another, which we would be unwilling to return in kind, is like borrowing with the intention of not repaying, while to enforce such a service by taking advantage of the poverty or necessity of the person would be an outrage like forcible robbery." <sup>1)</sup> And as a practical illustration of this lesson there is the waiter, who does not in the least regard himself as the servant of those he serves, nor is he in any way dependent upon them. As a matter of fact it is the nation which he is serving and his work is done for the benefit of the commonwealth. "I should as soon expect our waiter to-day to look down on me, because I served him as a doctor as think of looking down on him because he serves me as a waiter." <sup>2)</sup> I admit the theory is not quite tenable, but still Bellamy's suggestions are far more in accordance with his principles about liberty and equality than those of More, who assigns the work to bondsmen or to foreigners. The remarks of Morris on the same subject are too absurd to waste paper on. "When the work was too disagreeable or troublesome, we have given it up." <sup>3)</sup>

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1) Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, London, Fred. Warne & Co., p. 91.

2) Ibid. p. 92.

3) William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, London, 1891, p. 108.



Lupton gives another explanation and points to a certain similarity between *De Civitate Dei* and the *Utopia* and believes that the punishment of people that are turned to slaves may have been inspired by St. Augustine. That More was a great admirer of the Christian Father is well known. In 1501 he was appointed Reader at Furnival's Inn and while holding this post, he delivered a course of lectures in the Church of St. Lawrence, Old Jewry on *De Civitate Dei*. Unfortunately we cannot ascertain what parts of this work he lectured on, as no record of them has been preserved. Is it possible that indications of favourite passages may be found in suggestive analogous passages in the *Utopia*? In St. Augustine we find the following particulars. (Lib. XIX. Cap. 15). Bondslaves are not mentioned in Scripture, till Noah pronounced serfdom as a punishment for his undutiful son. "Proinde nusquam Scripturarum legimus servum, antequam hoc vocabulo Noe justus peccatum filii vindicaret." <sup>1)</sup> St. Augustine then continues that sin is the primal cause of servitude. "Prima ergo servitutis causa peccatum est." <sup>2)</sup> At the same time the Christian Father exhorts the bondsmen to bear their fate patiently. "Ideoque Apostolas etiam servos monet subditos esse dominis suis, et ex animo eis cum bona voluntate servire." <sup>3)</sup> Lupton draws a parallel between this passage and the corresponding one in the *Utopia*, and points out that the slaves in More's fiction are only condemned to that state of life for the perpetration of some crime, thus being taken into Utopia from motives of humanity, or at least their example is used to show that a humane policy is also the most profitable. <sup>4)</sup> Slaves are only such as "for heynous offences be punnyshed with bondage, or elles such as in the Cytyes of other landes for greate trespasses be condempned to deathe.

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1) *De Civitate Dei* par L. Moreau, Paris, Garnier frères. Vol. III. p. 233.

2) *Ibid.* p. 234.

3) *Ibid.* p. 234.

4) Lupton's edition of the *Utopia*, Introduction LI.

And of thys sorte of bondemen they have mooste stoore." <sup>1)</sup> On the strength of another passage in the *Utopia* about the customs and institutions of the Polylerites <sup>2)</sup> (Utopians under another name) and their treatment of slaves, how "every yere dyvers be restored agayne to their freedome, throughe the commendatyon of their patience" <sup>3)</sup> Lupton concludes "we find More combining Augustine's theory of bondage, as the proper punishment of sin, with the most modern theories as to the alleviation of penal servitude. He may be looked on as the first suggester of the "ticket of leave." Whatever may have been More's motives for introducing bondsmen in his commonwealth, whether he did so on practical or on religious grounds, a state of bondage can hardly be tolerated in a community of people that live or are supposed to live under ideal circumstances.

War, which More abhorred, should be carried on by assassinating the leader of the enemy. <sup>4)</sup> This is indeed a very humane proposal. But we are sorely disappointed, when we read about the ignoble methods applied in warfare. The upright and wise Utopians never scruple to employ the basest intrigues against their enemies; this base conduct being all the more unjustifiable in those who, by the writer are set up as paragons of perfection. The contemptible methods in warfare remind us strongly of the intrigues of Henry VIII and his minister Dacre against Scotland, their attempts to sow treason and disaffection among the Scotch lords being an exact exemplification of the Utopian policy. More has put this part in the wrong place: it should have been transferred to Bk. I. which is specially intended for a discussion of contemporary evils and vices. As More expresses his hatred of war and his contempt of military glory in the first part of his romance, there is no palpable

About  
their  
practices  
in  
warfare.

rather  
More  
of the

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, p. 99.

2) Polylerites = babblers of much nonsense.

3) Bk. I. p. 26.

4) Ibid. Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VIII

reason why he should insist on it again in the second. If the Utopians cannot avoid war by bribing the adversaries, "then they procure occasions of debate and dyssentyon to be spredde emonge theyre enemyes, as by bryngynge the prynces brother, or some of the noble men, in hoope to obtayne the kyngdome. Yf thys way prevayle not, then they reyse up the people that be nexte neygheboures and borderers to theyr enemyes, and them they sette in theyr neckes under the coloure of some olde tytyle of ryghte, suche as kynges doo never lacke." <sup>1)</sup> In a word the Utopians employ stratagems which, on the strength of their moral principles one would not think them capable of. Lupton tries to defend the author when he observes, "More's plea might have been that, as the world then was, it was ever the old story : delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi," by which remark he has not succeeded in justifying Utopian practices in warfare.

That More would have been the last to expect his dream realized in every point, even though it had been in his power to effect it, may be proved by some striking examples. In the *Utopia* More defends a dissolution of marriage under certain circumstances (Bk. II. Ch. VII.), but later on he cannot — on religious considerations — approve of the divorce of the King. Nor are his views on the justification of suicide quite consistent with those of a devout Christian. Was this passage composed under classical influence? For suicide under the condition specified by More (viz. in case the patient was suffering from "an uncurable dysease full of contynuall payne and anguyshe" <sup>2)</sup>), was unanimously allowed and even encouraged by the Ancients, Stoics, and all other sects alike, even by Plato. <sup>3)</sup> Here at least the influence of More's favourite divine is far to seek, for St. Augustine absolutely forbids it under

1) Churton Collins's edition of the *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VIII. p. 114.

2) Ibid. Bk. II. Ch. VII. p. 100.

3) See *Laws*, Bk. IX.



any circumstances. "Nam utique si non licet privata potestate hominem occidere vel nocentem, cujus occidendi licentiam lex nulla concedit : profecto etiam qui se ipsum occidit, homicida est ; et tanto fit nocentior, cum se occiderit, quanto innocentior in ea causa fuit, qua se occidendum putavit." <sup>1)</sup> This verdict is worked out at great length in the next chapters (Capita XVIII, XIX and XX), in which he stresses the fact that God has never commanded or allowed us to commit suicide. And St. Augustine is diametrically opposed to More, when he says, "Magis enim mens infirma deprehenditur, quae ferre non potest vel duram sui corporis servitute[m], vel stultam vulgi opinionem ; majorque animus merito dicendus est, qui vitam aerumnosam magis potest ferre, quam fugere" ; <sup>2)</sup> and again, "Nolunt autem isti, contra quos agimus, ut sanctum virum Job, qui tam horrenda mala in sua carne perpeti maluit, quam illata sibi morte omnibus carere cruciatibus." <sup>3)</sup>

In Utopia More allows priests to be married. That More's real views on this subject must be sought elsewhere than in the *Utopia*, becomes clear from his *Apology*, in which he declares, "Let al these heretykes and al that bear them favoure fynde out among them al so muche as one of all the holy saintes that so did construe the scripture as now these heretykes do for wedding of monkes, freres and nunnes, whyche the whole catholyke churche all thys fyftene hundred yeaere, before these late lewde heresies beganne, have ever more abhorred and holden for abominable, let these new brethren (I say) now fynde out among them all, any one of the olde holy saintes that sayd the breache of theyr vowes was no syn, and then am I content they say that al the remanaunt be whole upon theyr part in all the remanaunt of all theyr poysoned heresyas." <sup>4)</sup> To the same question he refers again in Cap. IX.,

About  
priests

1) *De Civitate Dei*, Viol. I. Cap. XVII. p. 33.

2) *Ibid.* Cap. XXII. p. 42.

3) *Ibid.* Cap. XXIV. p. 45.

4) Sir Thomas More's *English Workes* of 1557, Cap. VI. p. 858.

when he says of the wedding of priests, "whyche thinge is as all the worlde wotteth, beastlye and abominable in dede" <sup>1)</sup> and Cap. XXV in his rehearsal of complaints against the clergy, "matrimony of priests that lyve in sacrilege and incestuous lechery, as frere Luther doth." <sup>2)</sup>

Indirectly More condemns the marriage of priests, when he says that the laws of the Church must be strictly observed by the clergy. <sup>3)</sup> The question must be put here whether More could have justified the marriage of priests to which he has never given sanction in his writings?

The mention of priests leads me to discuss the last and one of the longest chapters, entitled "Of the religyons in Utopia." The ample space given to this subject is what we might expect from a man, who felt highly attracted to theological studies and who at one time of his life seriously thought of becoming a priest. "My selfe am perde a temporall manne and by twyse weddyng am come in the case that I canne never be prieste," he sadly remarked in the tenth chapter of his *Apology*.

Their  
religion  
broad and  
tolerant.

Every conceivable system and sect finds a place among the Utopians. "Yet in this pointe they agree all togethers with the wisest sort, in belevynge that there is one chiefe and pryncipall God, the maker and ruler of the hole worlde, whome they all commonly in their countrey language call Mythra." <sup>4)</sup> Before the rule of King Utopus, the islanders had been torn by religious dissensions. After the conquest the wise King ordained "that it shulde be lawfull for every man to favoure and followe what religion he would, and that he myght do the beste he cold to bryng other to his opinion, so that he dyd it peaceably, gentilye, quyetyly and

1) *English Workes*, Cap. IX. p. 866.

2) *Ibid.* Cap. XXV. p. 889.

3) *Ibid.* Cap. XLIII. p. 914.

4) Mithras was the Persian Sun-God. As the Utopian language was "not unlike the Persian tongue", it is not unnatural that they should worship the same God.

soberlye without hastye and contentious rebuking and invehying against other.”<sup>1)</sup> Significant are the concluding remarks, “If he coulede not by fayre and gentle speche induce them unto his opinion, yet he should use no kinde of violence, and refrayne from displeasaunt and seditious woordes. To him that would vehemently and ferventlye in this cause strive and contend, was decreid bannishment or bondage.”<sup>2)</sup> Intolerant preachers who made use of invective or violence were exiled or made bondsmen. The attitude of the islanders towards religion being further illustrated by Raphael Hythloday and his companions who could without hindrance proclaim the Christian faith. When one of the islanders had been converted and said that he preferred this religion to all others and utterly despised and condemned others, calling them prophane, and their adherents “wicked and develish” and “the children of everlasting damnation”, he was condemned into exile, “not as a despyser of religion, but as a sedicious persone.”<sup>3)</sup> One restriction only was imposed: all had to believe in the immortality of the soul, for “no man shoulde conceave so vile and base an opinion of the dignity of man’s nature, as to thinke that the sowles do dye and perishe with the bodye.”<sup>4)</sup> He that cannot believe in the immortality of the soul, is deprived of all honour and excluded from all offices and “reiecte from all common administrations in the weale publyque.”<sup>5)</sup>

For details about the public worship I would refer to the *Utopia* itself. What makes this chapter on the different religions remarkable, is the spirit of liberality and of tolerance that contrasts very strangely with the feeling of implacable hatred against the heretics in More’s polemical works. It is especially *The Apology* which enables us to form a correct idea of his attitude towards religious affairs. This subject is of so great importance, it has given rise to so much subsequent controversy, that I wish to devote a special chapter to it.

1) Churton Collins’s edition of the *Utopia*, pp. 125 and 126. 2) Ibid. p. 126.  
3) Ibid. p. 125. 4) Ibid. p. 126. 5) Ibid. p. 127.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE APOLOGY.

In the preceding chapter we remarked that in *Utopia* the most advanced principles of religious toleration held sway, but that in practice More's conduct was influenced by no theory of toleration. A man, who, in his romance, is not only the advocate of religious tolerance, but upholds as an ideal a religion so liberal that it differs in hardly any respect from that of Plato, becomes in practice the stern and uncompromising champion of rigid, strait-laced dogma. Strange and puzzling contradictions increase after a comparison between the ninth chapter of the *Utopia* and More's letters to Erasmus on the same subject. What to conclude from the following passages?

*Utopia*. Bk. II. Ch. IX. p. 125.<sup>1)</sup>

One of the Utopians, after having turned Christian "began against our willes, with more earnest affection then wisdom, to reason of Christes religion; and began to waxe so hotte in his matter, that he dyd not only preferre oure relygion before all other, but also dyd utterlye despise and condempne al other, callynge them prophane, and the followers of them wicked and develishe, and the chyl dren of everlasting dampnation. When he had thus longe reasoned the matter, they layde holde on hym, accused hym, and condemned hym into exyle;

Letter from More to Erasmus on December 18, 1525.

If the Lutherans had intended anything, he would have had notice of it before, especially in the publication of the first book, in which he had painted the Lutheran monster in such vivid colours.<sup>2)</sup>

In 1533 More writes to Erasmus a long letter, ending as follows, "I have purposely stated in my epitaph that I molested the heretics, for I so hate that folk that, unless they repent, I would rather incur their animosity, so mischievous are they to the world.<sup>3)</sup> Besides several other epistles in which

1) Churton Collins's edition.

2) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. IV. No. 882.

3) *Ibid.* Vol. VI. No. 303.

not as a despyser of religion, but as a sedicious persone, and a rayser up of dissention amonge the people. For this is one of the auncientest lawes amonge them: *that no man shalbe blamed for reasonyng in the mayntenaunce of his owne religion.*" 1)

he complains of the rapid progress of heretical doctrines, notwithstanding the efforts that have hitherto been made to repress them. 2)

A passage in Kautsky's work *Thomas More und seine Utopie* only tended to increase my perplexities. On p. 153 the writer remarks that there are no difficulties at all and that he had found ample proof of More's religious tolerance in *The Apology*, which statement was based on the two following quotations. "Von allen Denen, die mir (More) wegen Ketzerei übergeben wurden, hat kein Einziger, so wahr mir Gott helfe, einen Schlag oder Streich erhalten, nicht einmal einen Nasenstüber" and the other: "Was die Ketzzer anbelangt, so missverstehe man mich nicht. Ich hasse ihre Irrthümer, nicht ihre Personen, ich wünschte jene würden vernichtet, diese geschont." These passages were of so much interest that I applied to Mr. Kautsky for further information. After this gentleman had communicated to me that *The Apology* was to be found in the British Museum, I went to London to peruse the original there.

The exact title of the rare copy I was allowed to consult in the British Museum is *The Apologye of Syr Thomas More, Knyght*, "prynted by W. Rastell", 1533. I could not finish the work in London, but as it contained so many valuable data for the solution of the problem, I resolved to complete my task in Holland. The great difficulty was, however, to obtain the work. The edition of 1533 could not be procured, and the British Museum does not on any account lend out books. Fortunately there exists a later edition of 1557, entitled *Sir Thomas More's Workes*, and this edition, though rare, was in the possession of the "Bayrische Staatsbibliothek"

Early  
Edition.

1) Italics are mine.

2) *Letters and Papers*, Vol. V. No. 1094.

in Munich. <sup>1)</sup> It was through the Amsterdam University Library that the copy was sent to me. I make mention of these particulars that the student interested in the subject may know where to find the sources for further investigation.

From a controversial standpoint the perusal of *The Apology* was a success, for it enabled me to refute Mr. Kautsky's statement in every respect; from a literary point of view, however, it was a great disappointment. Often I have had serious doubts as to its authorship; more than once I have asked myself whether the *Utopia* and *The Apology* could have been written by one and the same person! Whereas the *Utopia* is remarkable for its highly condensed style (it is hardly possible to express its ideas in a more concise form without sacrificing clearness) and is entirely free from the scurrility which is characteristic of the age, *The Apology* is extremely prolix, many of its pages being moreover sullied by abusive and opprobrious language. We involuntarily call to mind the picture of More and his household at Chelsea, we think of the judgment of Englishmen and strangers admitted to his presence, all testifying to the peace, purity, love, courtesy and refinement that reigned supreme in his family and we wonder how a man of his culture, his dignity could be capable of composing such an undignified piece of prose. Judging from its contents one would say that More, from the mildest, the kindest and the most benevolent of men has suddenly been transformed into the harshest and austere of fanatics. Yet there can be no doubt as to the authenticity of *The Apology*; it is printed in the complete edition of *English Workes* and in it More makes constant references to his other controversial writings, notably to his *Confutation of Tindale's answer*. More seems to have been aware of these shortcomings himself. In Cap. I. § A. p. 846 <sup>2)</sup> he expresses serious doubts whether

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1) The former Bibliotheca Regia Monacensis.

2) *English Workes*, Vol. II.



his adversaries will study his work well "for they fynd first for a great faulte that my wryting is over long, and therefore too tedious to reade. For which cause they saye they wyll never vouchsafe to loke theron." Sometimes More will speak words of encouragement to the reader, exhorting him to keep up heart and read his work to the end ; thus there is a marginal note to Cap. XXI. § D. p. 881. "Note thys tale to the ende." In Cap. IX (p. 863) he refers to the opprobrious language he is in the habit of using, but brings forward a lame and highly unsatisfactory excuse, alleging that it is very difficult "to fynde good names for evyll things."

*The apology* of Syr Thomas More knight, "made by hym. Anno 1533. after that he had geven over thoffice of lord chauncellour of Englande" occurs in Vol. II. of Sir Thomas More's *Workes* of 1557, "imprinted at London in Fletestrete at the sygne of the hande and starre, at the coste and charge of John Cawod, John Walley and Richard Tottle, finished in Apryll, the yere of our Lorde God 1557." <sup>1)</sup> For reasons assigned above it is no attractive piece of literature. We may add that it consists of fifty chapters, printed in Gothic type, that there is no table of contents, no general index, nor anything else that might help the reader through the labyrinth of controversial topics. If, therefore, the student wants to learn More's views on

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1) The *Dictionary of National Biography* (Vol. LVIII., p. 74) gives the following particulars. Richard Tottle (d. 1594) occupied from 1553 until his death a house and shop known as The Hand and Star, between the gates of the Temples and Fleet Street within Temple Bar. When the Stationers' Company of London was created in 1557, Tottle was nominated member and filled several high positions in this Company. He published a.o. More's *Dialogue of Comfort* (1553) and is especially known on account of his publication of a poetical anthology under the name of *Tottle's Miscellany*.

John Cawood (1514—1572) was one of the chief printers of the time. When he printed for himself, he was established at the sign of the Holy Ghost in St. Paul's Churchyard. (*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. IX, p. 379). Whether John Walley was also a printer, I have not been able to find out.

theology — and as a theological treatise the work has no doubt its merit, because it manifests the author's extensive and deep knowledge of Scripture — he is bound to go right through the work. As I know from experience what this means, I have subjoined an extract, which may be considered as a kind of general index or reference to *The Apology* and which I sincerely hope will be of some practical use to investigators. <sup>1)</sup>

Its  
object.

The professed object of *The Apology* was to answer accusations made against the clergy as regards the treatment of heretics. More was not satisfied about the way in which affairs were conducted. A writer, who in *The Apology* appears under the name of the Pacifier, had tried to allay the quarrel that was springing up between the clergy and the laity, but his mode of pacifying could not by any means meet with the approval of More, who was afraid that the measures taken would be fatal to the Roman Catholic cause. To explain his standpoint More compares the methods of the Pacifier with those of a peacemaker who would step in between two men about to fight, put one gently back and “buffet the tother about the face and than go foorth and saye that he hadde parted a fraye and pacyfyed the partyes : some men woulde saye agayne (as I suppose) that he had as lief his enemye were let alone wyth hym, and thereof abyde the adventure as have suche a friende stay in betwene to parte them.” (Cap. XIII. § D. p. 872). From the contents it appears — and this is very remarkable — that the Peacemaker must have been a Roman Catholic priest, yet it is the clergy that receive all the buffets at his hand. This rouses More's ire and indignation, but even more so the way in which his opponent attacks the “spirituality.” There are no distinct charges : the Pacifier only repeating every kind of malicious gossip and screening himself behind “Some say” or “They say”, which despicable mode of con-

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1) See Appendix II.

troversy More condemns by mockingly referring to his adversary as "Some say" or "They say." We shall refrain from enumerating the accusations brought against the Pacifier; we shall leave this task to theologians, but we would express our great surprise how *The Apology* could ever be held forth as a proof of More's religious tolerance, as this controversy from the first word to the last breathes a spirit of fierce intolerance and contains a vehement denunciation of the heretics. In the very first chapter More declares that whatever he writes is "consonant unto the comon catholike fayth and determinacions of Chrystes Catholike Church and are cleare confutations of false blasphemous heresies by Tindall and Barnes." (It should be noticed in passing that *The Apology* is not merely a dialogue between More and the Pacifier, in which the latter's method of bringing about a better understanding between the "Spirituality" and the "Laity" is strongly condemned, but the work is primarily a defence of the Roman Catholic Church and a fierce attack upon its enemies).

Kautsky, who admires More on account of his communistic principles — principles which More himself did not by any means want to be put into practice! — thought he could exonerate him from any accusation of intolerance by quoting the two memorable passages from *The Apology*.

Cap. XXXVI. § H. pp. 901 and 902.

And of al that euer came in my hand  
foz heresye, as helpe me God, sauing as  
I said the sure keeping of them, and yet  
not so sure neither, but that George Co-  
stardine could stele awaye: els had neuer  
any of the any stryke oꝝ stroke giue the,

so muche as a fylppe on the forehead.

and the second :



## Cap. XLIX § H. p. 925.

As touching heretikes, I hate that  
 vice of theirs and not their persons, and  
 very faine would I that the one were  
 destroyed, and the other saved. And yf I  
 haue towarde no man any other minde  
 then this, (howe lowdely so ever these  
 blessed newe brythren the proficours &  
 preachers of verety helpe mee) if all the  
 favour and pity that I haue used amōg  
 them to their amendement were kno-  
 wen, it would I warrant you well and  
 plaine appere, wherof if it were requy-  
 site I could bring forth witnessses more  
 then men would wene.

These words may go far to prove that the charge of cruelty brought against More, may be without foundation, but taken out of their framework, they are sure to throw a wrong light upon the true situation. For impartiality compels us to admit that these quotations cannot free More from a charge of intolerance. Besides, when these passages are quoted, others should be considered as well that tell very heavily against him. How could any critic that has read *The Apology* somewhat carefully, adduce this work as evidence of More's religious tolerance? What about the fourth chapter in which More speaks of Tyndale's "false translacyon" (of the Bible) which "trewe catholike people call very false pestilent heresies." (Cap. IV. p. 849). Tyndale, Swinglius "with al their adherentes. be plaine, abominable heretikes" (Cap. VI. p. 858) and "in the meantime those heretics go busyllye aboute to heappe uppe to the skye theyre foule fylthye dunghyll of all olde and new false stynckynge heresyas, gathered uppe together againste the trewe catholike faithe of Christe." (Cap. IX. pp. 863 and 864). Heretics are "blasphemous fooles" and in one respect we ought to be partial, viz. when we have to choose "betwene truthe and falsehod, the catholik church and heretikes, betwene God and the diuel." (Cap. X. p. 867). Heretics

are mentioned in one breath with the scum of society ; people that are “noyous unto the common weale, as theves, murderers, damnable heretikes.” (Cap. XI. p. 870). The climax being reached in Cap. XLIX., where the writer remarks that heretics are a danger, a pest to the State and is of opinion that “those whose corrupte canker no cure can heale, must be cut of in season for corrupting farther.” (Cap. XLIX. § E., p. 925). Only a few examples have been quoted here ; the list may be extended *ad libitum*. We need not pursue this subject any further : More condemns himself and Mr. Kautsky has not done a very wise thing by drawing our attention to *The Apology* — the very title of which is a farce — and by adducing this work in evidence of More’s religious tolerance.

An other question, of historical value, but more difficult to solve is whether we can free More from the charge of cruelty in his persecutions of the Reformers during the time he was Lord Chancellor of England. It struck me as very strange that historians should not have tried to draw certain inferences from *The Apology*. Why sould this work be ignored ? Is there any reason why we should in the least doubt the truth of More’s statements, his veracity and integrity being admitted even by his enemies ? Why then should not we accept that the sentiments expressed in *The Apology* absolutely reflect More’s own ? Starting from this maxim, *The Apology* can give us some very valuable information. I admit that the statements made in Cap. XXXVI. and Cap. XLIX. (Kautsky’s passages) are highly significant, and would, as I have already said, go far to remove the blot from More’s character. I am afraid, however, that an entirely wrong representation of facts would be given, if other suggestive and sometimes contradictory statements were passed over in silence. Inconsistent More is, when he speaks of the persecutions of the heretics. In one chapter he will remark that the Roman Catholics have not been cruel, as only very few heretics have been accused and executed. “I wene in some seven yere not

one, not fyve in fyftene yere." (Cap. XL. § G. p. 909), but in Cap. XLII he emphatically declares that if no stringent measures are taken against the heretics, we shall witness the same subversion of faith in this realm as in Switzerland and Saxony. (Cap. XLII § H. p. 911) and somewhat further, when he reproaches the Roman Catholics and calls them "lax and indifferent", he says that they should "have waxen warmer afore, and have repressed those heretiques in time, *before they grew to so many.*" <sup>1)</sup> (Cap. XLVII § G. p. 922).

That More undoubtedly punished heretics may be inferred from Cap. XXIII., when he observes that everybody is bound to denounce or accuse heretics and the bishops are bounden to "putte them to penaunce and reform theym, which if they refuse or fall in relapse, the bishoppe is bounde to deliver thē, *and all good temporall gouvernours are then bounden to punish them.*" <sup>2)</sup>

As More, in his capacity of Lord Chancellor of England was himself the highest "temporall gouvernour", we are justified in asserting that he most certainly persecuted the heretics, though we concede that it does not follow yet that he should have tortured them.

In Cap. XXXVII. More complains of many fictitious tales about cruelty done to heretics, and speaking of Frith, whose *Disputacion of Purgatorye* is fiercely denounced by him, he expresses his fears that Christ will kindle a fire of fagots for him and "make hym therin sweate the bloude out of his bodye here and straight from hence send hys soyle for ever into the fyre of hell." (Cap. XXXVII. § G. p. 903), but he quickly adds, "Now in these wordes I neyther mēt nor meane that I would it wer so. For so help me God and none otherwyse, but as I would be glad to take more labour, losse and bodelye payne also, then peradventure many a man would wene

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1) Italics are mine.

2) Italics are mine.



to winne that yonge man to Christ and hys true faythe agayne, and thereby to preserve and keepe hym from the losse and peryll of soule and body both."

We believe that More sincerely endeavoured to convert apostates by gentle persuasions at first. What measures he was in the habit of taking, if the sinner persisted in his errors, may be gathered from the following passage about Thomas Philips, who had been arrested on a charge of heresy. As Froude's <sup>1)</sup> account differs in some respects materially from More's, I think it worth while to give both.

Froude tells us that Thomas Philips was accused of having used orthodox expressions on transubstantiation, on purgatory, pilgrimages and confession, but after he had freed himself of all these charges he was acquitted. Froude, however, adds, "But the law, except when it was on their own side, was of little importance to the church authorities. As they had failed to prove Philips guilty of heresy, they called upon him to confess his guilt by abjuring it; 'as if', he says, 'there were no difference between a nocent and an innocent, between a guilty and a not guilty.'" He refused resolutely and was remanded to prison in open violation of the law. This was done by the bishop in conjunction with Sir Thomas More, and Froude continues (p. 48), "Philips, no longer under the protection of the law, was committed to the Tower, where he languished for three years, protesting, but protesting fruitlessly against the tyranny which had crushed him and clamouring for justice in the deaf ears of pedants who knew not what justice meant." <sup>2)</sup>

In *The Apology* (Cap. XXXVIII §§ F. G. & H. p. 905) More

1) See Froude's *History of England*, (Vol. II. "Sir Thomas More as Chancellor", p. 47).

2) Froude winds up, "Happily the years of his imprisonment had been years of swift revolution. The House of Commons had become a tribunal where oppression would not any longer cry wholly unheard; Philips appealed to it for protection and recovered his liberty." (Vol. II. p. 48).

says of Thomas Philips "now in the towre" that when he heard of his heresies, he sent for him. He argued with Philips "and laboured about hys amendment in as hearty loving manner as he coulde," but seeing that he was not able to change his mind, and aware that the man would do great harm, he "by indenture delivered hym to his ordinary." More then explains why he resolved to send him to the Tower. He had noticed that Philips had "a great vain glorious lyking of hymself..... and feared that if he were in the bishoppes prieson, his gostly enemy the devill might make him there destroy himselfe..... I for these causes advised and by my menes holpe that Thomas Phylippes was received priesoner into the towre of London." But he adds, "And yet after that he complayned therupon, not agaynst me, but agaynst the ordinarye, whereupon the kinges highnesse commaunded certayn of the greatest lordes of hys counsayle to know how the matter stode, whiche knowen & reported to the kinges grace his highnesse as a most vertuous catholik prince gave unto Thomas Philipps such answer, as if he hadde been either halfe so good as I woulde he wer, or halfe so wyse as hymself weneth he wer, he woulde furthwith have folowed, and not stand still in his obstinacy so lōg, as he hath now put himself therby in another dieper perill." (p. 906 § A.)

This passage is suggestive and brings some grave charges of cruelty against him. It is a fact that More committed Philips to the Tower, for reasons which I cannot quite apprehend or appreciate. I would suppose that an ordinary in the Bishop's prison was better qualified for the conversion of heretics than the jailors in the Tower.

A more serious thing is that More knew about the complaint made by Philips. That he hypocritically adds, "Philips complayned therupon, not agaynst me, but agaynst the ordinarye," makes matters only worse: More was perfectly aware what sufferings were awaiting his victim in the Tower; yet he did not lift a finger

to put an end to his troubles, but simply wound up his account by referring to Philips's obstinacy "wherby he hath now put himself in another dieper perill." What "another dieper perill" (beside the damnation of his soul) meant, is not difficult to understand.

But the passages that do not leave the slightest doubt as to Mores' feelings, in which he comes forward as the merciless judge of apostates are found in Cap. XXV. and in Cap. XXXV. In Cap. XXV. (§ B. p. 890), More declares that the only wrong ever done to heretics was "that they were burned no sooner." This passage is of such paramount importance that I transcribe it literally :

therefoze let him come forth and appere <sup>1)</sup>  
in his proper persone, befoze the kynges  
grace and his counsaill, or in what place  
he list, and there pzooue calling me ther-  
to, that any one of all these had wzonge,  
but if it were fo; that they were burned  
no looner,

Highly significant is also More's approval of Bayfield's execution, who was "well and woorthelye burned in Smithfield," the exact words being :

Bayfielde the  
monke and apostata, that was an abin-  
red, and after periured and relapsed he-  
reticke, well and woozthelpe burned in  
Smithfielde

(Cap. XXXV § C. p. 899). Memorable words when we consider that Bayfield was executed under the Lord Chancellorship of More, who was consequently responsible for his death.

*The Apology* is little known and little read — the rarity of the work no doubt accounting for this — yet it affords valuable material for the estimation of More's attitude towards religious matters.

1) him = The Pacifier; these = Heretics; but if (very common from 14th to 16th c.) = if not, unless, except. (*New English Dict.*).



On the strength of his own statements made in *The Apology*, we are justified to say that More was a fierce persecutor of heretics, who thought no measures too stringent for the extirpation of heresy. Whether he submitted his victims to the torture of the rack, I have not been able to find out. He may not have been guilty of having ever condemned one to death, but as we may unhesitatingly accept his own assurances on this point, we may take for granted that on many occasions he made life bitter enough to them. Remains the question how the passages quoted by Kautsky (*Apology*, Cap. XXXVI and Cap. XLIX) can be reconciled to others expressing quite different sentiments? This is only possible when we interpret the words correctly. In the first passage More only wants to imply that *personally* he never did any harm to heretics (with the one or two exceptions admitted by himself <sup>1</sup>) and that he did not inflict corporal punishment upon the victims brought before him, but his words do not justify the supposition that he did not persecute heretics or that he would have done anything to repeal their terrible sentence. That More did not personally harm them, cannot free him yet from a charge of cruelty. As to the second passage we are quite willing to believe that More at first seriously endeavoured by gentle means to reclaim the apostate; we sympathise with him, when he sadly complains that his efforts in this direction are not duly appreciated, but maliciously explained. But here also we have to consider the "supplementary" information given in other passages referred to above, among others in Cap. XXV. when he

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1) In connection with the few exceptions mentioned by More in Cap. XXXVI of his *Apology* (see Appendix I), the *Dictionary of National Biography* drily remarks, "It is clear that he underrated his activity. He is known to have personally searched for heretical books in the house of John Petit, a friend of his in the City and committed him to prison, where he soon died, before any charge had been formulated against him. For an account in detail I refer to *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation* edited by Nichols (Camden Society 1859). "Of an ancient Protestant called Mr. John Petit, Burgess for the City of London in Parliament." From this description it does not appear, however, that Petit was a friend of More's.

callously remarks that "they (the heretics) ought to have been burned before," and in Cap. XXXV, where he approves of the torture of heretics, for Bayfield was "well and woorthelye burned in Smithfielde." In *The Apology* More stamps himself as a merciless judge of his adversaries, who openly speaks in favour of burning stubborn heretics, and whose words and deeds give evidence of great hatred of the enemies of the Church. In his opinion heresy was the greatest human vice, a crime worse than treason. (See *Apology*, Cap. XLI.) We are not putting the question whether More was right or wrong in his judgment regarding heresy. The theological side of the problem we would leave to more competent judges than ourselves. We have only introduced this subject to prove that More, the advocate of religious tolerance and More, the polemical controversialist are two entirely distinct persons. Yet I would venture to observe that we ought not to attach a wrong meaning to the word heretic as used by More; it should not be taken in too narrow a sense. I do not think More designated by this name only the followers or adherents of the great reformers, but in general all those who had the presumption to deny the Divine guidance and supreme authority of the Church. In this connection I remarked already that More's attacks were not only confined to Luther, Tyndale, Swinglius and others, but that he especially addressed all those who did not duly reverence the Institutions of the Church (the Holy Sacraments) and its Servants (the priests). Whether the apostate is a follower of Luther or of Swinglius makes very little difference to More. For him the quintessence is that "in the construccion and exposicion of Holy Scripture" people do not, in one single point, deviate from the dogma of the Church. (Compare Cap. VI and Cap. IX). When John Frith fell into the hands of the authorities, was imprisoned and executed, he was not asked whether he was an adherent of Luther or of any other reformer, but he was condemned, because he could not unconditionally

accept the tenets of the Church, and had ventured to write a treatise against the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.

If for a moment we should have been considering the possibilities whether More's harsh treatment of heretics might to some extent be excused by alleging that as Lord Chancellor of England he had to persecute those brought before him on charges of heresy, the information given above must have dismissed any such thought as utterly unfounded. In our researches we have not allowed ourselves to be influenced by religious fanatics, nor have we attached much value to the verdict of critics whose partiality or prejudices can only tend to warp our judgment. The great thing is not whether Froude denounces More as a "merciless bigot," whether Foxe represents him as "blinded in the zeal of popery." If we are to form a fair and correct estimate of the case, it is imperative to consult More's original works and inquire for ourselves. To the particulars gathered from *The Apology* it is necessary to add some found in Vol. I. of his *English Workes*, all of which can only strengthen us in our belief that tolerance in theory did not — in the case of More — mean tolerance in practice. In this volume the writer expresses his great joy that the King "desires nothing more than the maintenance of the trew Catholique faithe" and that His Majesty "nothing more detesteth then these pestilent bokes that Tindall and suche other sende into the realme."<sup>1)</sup> More then declares that he will readily and willingly follow the command "to helpe as muche as in me is that his people abandon the contagion of all suche pestilent wryting <sup>2)</sup> as heresies "are hard to be cured." These are not the sentiments of a man, who in his *Utopia* emphatically states "that it shoulde be lawfull for every man to favoure and followe what religion he would."<sup>3)</sup> Of John Tewkesbury, the leatherseller, who was burned on December 20,

1) *English Workes*, p. 351. §§ D & E.

2) Ibid. p. 351. § G.

3) *Utopia*, p. 125.



1531, he says, "For which thinges and divers other horrible heresies he was delivered at last unto the secular handes and burned, as there was never wretche I wene better worthy." <sup>1)</sup> The *Dictionary of National Biography* adds, "Nor did he conceal his dislike of the King's suggestion that the laws against heresy should be relaxed. The King showed signs of anger and three days later More perceiving his position impossible, resigned his office of Chancellor." <sup>2)</sup>

But also before his Chancellorship More had given proof that what he advocated in theory, he did not by any means want to put into practice. In March 1527 More asked and received permission from Bishop Tunstall to read heretical books and the Hanse merchants issued in the same month a printed circular announcing that Wolsey and More had forbidden the importation of Lutheran works into England. In 1528 More completed his *Dialogues*, his first controversial book in English, which was directed mainly against Tindal's writings. Thenceforth with Tindal and his allies Frith and George Joye, he waged unceasing battle. <sup>3)</sup> Let us remember that nobody had compelled him to attack those that held different religious views, and if More had lived in Utopia, where the King had given "to every man free libertie and choyse to beleve what he woulde," <sup>4)</sup> he himself — strange and preposterous as the case may be — would have been the first to be sent into exile. For in Utopia there was one newly baptised "began against our willes, with more earnest affection than wisdom to reason of Christes religion, and began to waxe so hotte in this matter, that he dyd not only preferre our relygion before all other, but also dyd utterly despise and condempne all other, callynge them prophane, and the followers of them wicked and develishe, and the chyl dren of everlasting dampnation." <sup>5)</sup> Here is a curious instance of self-accusation, for

1) *English Workes*, p. 348. § E.

2) Vol. XXXVIII. See *More*.

3) Not to speak of his polemical writings against Luther, under the pseudonym of William Ross (London 1523).

4) Churton Collins's edition of *Utopia*, p. 126.

5) *Ibid.* p. 125.

does not the writer identify himself with the very man whom he condemns in his *Utopia*? Indeed so vehement were his attacks on heretics that his enemies were inclined to believe that the clergy had paid him for his invaluable services. This charge, however, is without any foundation. It is true, the Bishops of England had once offered him a liberal reward, but he had refused this "bribe" in great indignation, saying, "Not so, my Lords; I had rather see it cast all into the Thames than I or anie of mine should have thereof one penny."<sup>1)</sup>

Are we to accuse More of insincerity when, in his *Utopia* he advocates tolerance in religious matters or are we to suppose that in course of time he had considerably modified his views on the subject? More's biographers have given a satisfactory answer to both questions. Insincerity was a vice he had never been guilty of, and there is ample proof that More throughout his life had been a staunch Roman Catholic. On the strength of our researches we are justified to assert that the stringent measures he took for the suppression of heresy during his Chancellorship he would have taken at any period of his life, if circumstances had allowed or necessitated him to do so. We should not forget that More preached his "Utopian" ("Utopian" in more than one sense) tolerance in 1516, when Luther had not yet disturbed the world by his doctrines of reformation.<sup>2)</sup> How the chapter on religious liberty in his romance would have looked, if it had been written at

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1) See *Life of More by his Great Grandson*. Ch. VII "Admirable zeale in cause of catholike religion against all heresie." p. 172.

2) That More feared the great power of the Protestants, may appear from the following passage in Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXII. p. 43 "He had great misgivings as to the progress of the reformers, and even anticipated the time when, in England, those who adhered to the old faith might be denied religious liberty. 'I pray God,' said he, 'as high as we sit upon the mountains, treading heretics under our feet like ants, live not the day that we gladly would wish to be at league and composition with them to let them have their churches, so that they would be contented to let us have ours quietly.'"

a time when heresy was spreading all over England, is not difficult to guess, when we consider the spirit of hatred and intolerance that pervades More's controversial works.

"More is one of those few personalities on which we can look with a satisfaction almost unalloyed," Mr. Snell remarks in *The Age of Transition*.<sup>1)</sup>

There was a time when I could perfectly share this opinion. But after having perused *The Apology*, I involuntarily called to mind Shakespeare's words, "One man in his time plays many parts."<sup>2)</sup> More no doubt played his, and the part he played in the great schism, has compelled me to modify my opinion. More, the creator of the model State with its ideal institutions is an entirely different man from More, the writer of polemical treatises on religious problems. The value of his voluminous controversial writings (they form about three fourths of his prose-works) I will neither belittle nor ignore. They give us an opportunity of admiring More's enormous capacity for work and his vast knowledge of Scripture, but we cannot help wishing that his capacity for work and his sound and extensive knowledge had been utilized for other purposes. Making due allowance for the fact that opprobrious language seemed to be "the fashion" of the age, we can only be heartily sorry that religious conviction could transform the most benevolent and generous of men into the harshest and cruellest of fanatics. We who have read More's correspondence with his wife and other members of his family, who remember him as a loving father of his children, who have before us Erasmus' inimitable picture of More at the head of his household, of More as the incorruptible judge, as the benefactor of the weak and the poor, would rather consider him from a literary-historical standpoint and think of the glorious days of his earlier years — and gladly draw a veil over his polemical treatises.

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1) *Handbook of English Literature. The Age of Transition.* Vol. II. p. 107.

2) *As you like it*, II. VII.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE UTOPIA.

Did More himself ever intend his *Utopia* to be set up as a model to be literally followed ? On the ground of the preceding discussions this question may be answered in the negative. More disavowed any personal belief in the practicability of communism, the leading principle in his fanciful State ; he was no communist himself and did not expect much good to come of the system. His real sentiments on the subject we find embodied in *The Apology*, especially Cap. XXII. in which he explains in a lengthy discussion how wrong it would be to abolish private property and to take away land or goods from others. Are we then to consider his *Utopia* merely as a *jeu d' esprit* ? Certainly not. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and I could imagine that when More saw about him people that had plenty (the landowners) and others that had nothing (the labourer and the discarded serving-man), he was inclined to propose equal division as an antidote against excess. More himself understood that such a division of property was an impossibility, but by his suggestions he wanted to put an end to the enormous disproportion between the poor and the rich, the noble and the serf. He advocated common property (on which communists chiefly base his adherence to their principles) by way of reaction against the then existing evil : monopolization, and I consider it very likely that More, highly indignant at the brutal egoism of the landowners, and shocked at the pitiful condition of the distressed tenants, suggested the extreme measure of common property as the only efficacious one. If More had lived in our days, he would have seen a very interest-

ing process going on, more particularly in Germany, where the very reverse of what he proposed in his *Utopia* is taking place: the State is not the universal provider, but rather encourages private enterprise. This process is quite a novelty in economical history, and the Germans, introducing a new word into their language express it characteristically by saying, "Man verstaatlicht jetzt nicht mehr, sondern man entstaatlicht." <sup>1)</sup>

The jocular tone in which More writes to Erasmus from London, in 1517, shortly after the publication of *Utopia*, may furthermore prove that he did not want his romance to be taken too seriously. In a playful mood he tells his friend that he is in the clouds with the dream of a government to be offered him by his Utopians; fancies himself a grand potentate, with a crown and a Franciscan cloak, followed by a grand procession of the Amauri. Should it please Heaven to exalt him to this high dignity, where he will be too high to think of common acquaintances, he will still keep a corner in his heart for Erasmus and Tunstall; and should they pay him a visit to Utopia, he will make all his subjects honour them as is befitting the friends of His Majesty. But he adds gravely, "The morn has dawned and dispelled his dream, and stripped off his royalty, plunging him down into his old mill-round at the Court." <sup>2)</sup> A man who is convinced he is going to describe a form of government that is to free mankind from all worries and troubles, and is to give bliss and happiness, will not speak in this strain and describe himself as "a grand potentate with a crown and a Franciscan cloak."

It is for the conscientious critic to find out where the writer is in earnest, where he is in jest. The *Utopia* as such can only be a dream, a fantasy, but a contemplation of its form of government would

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1) See German Newspapers about "Entstaatlichung der Eisenbahnen," and articles against it: "Gegen die Entstaatlichung der Eisenbahnen." *Kölnische Zeitung*, November 17 and November 24, 1921.

2) *Letters and Papers*, No. 3659.

prove to be highly profitable and instructive. The work will show what good could be effected, if the world would listen to the dictates of justice. Kings may learn that they are responsible to some other will than their own. Property, it is true, can never be common, but *Utopia* may teach the world that the State has to regard itself as created for the well-being of all, and not for a class or a favoured few.

That many of his ideas could indeed be fulfilled, the world's history has proved. In the course of this work we had an opportunity of drawing the reader's attention to some remarkable cases. We compared the conditions of the labour classes and pointed out that the six hours' standard has not yet been reached, but that the twelve hours' day of the "artificers" has been reduced to eight. Religious toleration, a dream four hundred years old, is becoming reality. The agriculturist has become the favourite member of the State. Each Utopian has a peculiar trade for which he has been trained. The growing emphasis on technical training is another important fulfilment of a Utopian ideal. The hint given by the institution of lectures, the attention paid to the self-improvement of mind and body, was readily taken, and the increase of university extension lectures and classes arranged by modern States in the last few years prove that the advice was not given in vain. What More meant by his curious and seemingly strange wedding ceremonies was discussed at length in the preceding chapter and will be understood by those who insist on medical examination before marriage under State control. The London streets are the best paved in the world, and had More lived in our days, he would have been satisfied with the progress, hygiene and sanitation are making, though the number of hospitals is certainly inferior to that of More's "Hospital City."

In jurisdiction also Thomas More anticipated modern lawyers by showing them that too stringent penalties, instead of stifling



crime, absolutely tend to increase it by rendering men desperate. ✓  
 It was More who proposed a careful examination of the causes and a milder punishment for the extreme penalty. Instead of the forfeiture of the offender's property to the King, he proposed that restitution should be made to those who had been defrauded by the theft. That More endeavoured to put these maxims into practice, may appear from the following: as Lord-Chancellor he caused a list of his judgments to be drawn up, and inviting the judges to dinner, discussed with them the grounds of his decision in each case. On their acknowledging his action to be reasonable, he recommended them in future to qualify the rigour of the law by equitable consideration.<sup>1)</sup> Last not least there is More's lesson for the governing few in Europe that bear responsibility for instigating the great war. If war is declared, the Utopians try first to kill the leaders responsible for the conflict, for they think it an act of mercy and love to mankind to prevent the slaughter of those that must otherwise be killed, and therefore propose the death of a few that are most guilty. "They promysse great rewardes to hym that will kyll their enemies prince, and sumwhat lesse gyftes, but them verye greate also, for everye heade of them, whose names be in the sayde proclamacions contened. They be those whome they count their chieffe adversaries, next unto the prince."<sup>2)</sup> This custom they consider in no respect base or despicable. "Yea, they counte it a dede of pyty and mercye, because that by the deathe of a fewe offenders, the lyves of a greate numbere of ynnocentes, aswell of their own men as also of their enemies, be raunsomed and saved, which in fighting shoulde have been sleane."<sup>3)</sup>

More puts his finger on real and flagrant vices, some of which were removed, be it long after they had been exposed, some of

1) *Dictionary of National Biography*. See *More*, p. 436.

2) Churton Collins's edition of *Utopia*, p. 113.

3) *Ibid.* p. 114.

which have remained unabolished till this hour. We, moderns, have not yet learned his wise lessons about internationalism, about leagues, and above all about warfare!

Considering the realization of many of More's ideas, we wonder whether the word "Utopian" is properly understood at all. How often do we hear people say, "Curious that More who was no dreamer, no fantast could ever have indulged in the creation of a work of a sportive and imaginative kind." Only to a certain extent are they right. It is true, his model State as such is an utter impossibility, because More does not invent ideal institutions for mankind, but an ideal mankind for their institutions.<sup>1)</sup> Taking the mass of mankind as they are, what would a community of goods amount to but a premium given to the lazy, the selfish and the vicious to prey upon industry and virtue? Have not fanatical advocates such as Cabet in France, who proposed to carry such chimeras into actual practice, been sorely disappointed? But considering the ideas, the thoughts individually, we wonder if critics who repudiate the Utopian ideas as silly and absurd, have ever read the little book from whose ideas they shrink. We seriously doubt if they have any conception of the number of Utopian ideals that have been carried into practice. More is understood only by few, because no sufficient trouble is taken to analyse his ideas. In this connection I was sorely disappointed in Michelet, who, in his *Histoire de France* says, "Thomas Morus est un romancier fade, dont la faible Utopie a grand' peine à trouver ce que les mystiques communistes du moyen âge avaient réalisé d'une manière plus originale. La forme est plate, le fonds commun. Peu d'imagination. Et pourtant peu de sens des réalités."<sup>2)</sup> It is strange that a man like Michelet could, in the case of More, speak of "peu d'imagination.

1) Plato starts the other way about and wants to perfectionize mankind, because no community can be called ideal, unless the individuals constituting the State, have arrived at a state of perfection.

J. Michelet. *Histoire de France*. Paris, Chamerot, 1855. Vol. VIII. p. 414.


Et pourtant peu de sens des réalités." What surprises me still more is that an eminent historian like Michelet could prefer medieval communists and give them credit for more originality. As I have expressed my views on this point elsewhere and given as my opinion that medieval writers rather showed a lack of originality, I need not enter into details here. <sup>1)</sup> Did it escape the notice of Michelet that More, as a typical humanist with his characteristic contempt of medieval institutions was not acquainted with the communistic doctrines of medieval times, nor ever wished to establish them? Did not he know that More was much more familiar with the classical period than any other? How to account for this verdict "Thomas Morus est un romancier fade?" when the great merit of the work is its fresh ideas, its originality of construction and its inimitable wit and humour? If Michelet had made some such remark, "More was penetrated with the spirit of Plato and as such adapted some thoughts from the *Republic* and from the *Critias*," I might to a certain extent have shared his opinion, though I should have pointed out that also in the handling of his material More followed a method typically his own. Far from sharing the popular beliefs of his time, he was entirely free from the prejudices of his age, and it is the novelty of thought, the inventiveness of a fertile mind that constitute one of the most attractive features of his composition. In what respect the epithet "fade" could in any way be applied to More, is, I must confess, a perfect puzzle to me. Nor does Michelet attempt to explain his standpoint or account for this unfavourable, and I would add, unjustifiable criticism. The only explanation I could give is that the French historian, for some reason of his own, was tempted to compare More with his countryman Rabelais. I could in that case somewhat understand his sentiments. Michelet might have been looking for the broad farce, the sarcasm, the boisterousness, — perhaps also for the coarseness —

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1) See Chapter III.



that characterise Rabelais' work, and not finding it in the English book, was sorely disappointed. It should be borne in mind — and this point must be emphasised for a due appreciation of the *Utopia* — that the romance is, in the widest sense of the word, thoroughly and typically English. This verdict applies especially to its wit and humour, and the question arises whether a Frenchman with his entirely different conceptions and feelings, could appreciate the English spirit at all. It is curious also that Michelet has not a word to say about the style of More's wonderful fiction. On the strength of his unfavourable judgment one would be inclined to think that Michelet has not paid much attention to this point. Yet its style is so characteristic and so typical of the writer's individuality and personality that I cannot but subject it to a closer examination. The *Utopia* is entirely free from the blemishes that mars More's polemical treatises. Whereas these are of inordinate length (as a consequence of frequent and endless reiterations) and written in a tone unfortunately as coarse as is habitual to the scholars and theologians of his time, More's masterpiece is remarkable for its concise and condensed form ; nor are its pages sullied by any abusive or opprobrious language. Yet, in spite of this condensation, the style is lucid and clear, for there are very few passages that require elucidation on account of obscurity or vagueness of expression, and if annotators think it necessary to comment on them, this must in most cases be ascribed to the reader's lack of a knowledge of contemporary conditions. From a stylistic standpoint the *Utopia* is nothing but a series of essays on a wide range of various topics. There is no intrigue to link the different subjects together or to impart an idea of unity to the whole. The dramatic element which occurs in the first part, is almost lacking in the second and yet, in spite of all this, the reader's interest never flags for a moment. This is for no inconsiderable part owing to the perfect way in which the writer conducts the vivid dialogue between the fictitious



traveller Raphael Hythloday and well-known living persons. These dialogues are given with astonishing skill and it is the secret of his style that makes the fantasy appear quite credible. More has realised that if his miraculous tale is to find credence, its narrator must make a reliable impression upon the reader. In this he perfectly succeeds, for Hythloday is not painted as a swaggering adventurer, but as a plain and observant man who tells his tale in an animated, but simple and natural manner. What gives an idea of reality to the whole is that Hythloday places himself on the standpoint of his listeners and admits how hard it would be for him to believe all about the fashions and laws of the Utopians. "I have the more cause to fear that my words shall not be believed," he says, "for that I know how difficultly and hardly I myself would have believed another man telling the same, if I had not myself seen it with mine own eyes." What gains the reader's confidence still more is the second judgment Raphael gives of *well-known* matters. There is the English episode, in which the stranger gives a report of the conversation at Cardinal Morton's table in which he himself has taken part. It was a highly felicitous thought to insert this passage, for by his frequent allusions to *English* political and social conditions, to *English* institutions, it seems as if Hythloday is an old friend of ours whom we have known for years. And as the account he gives of England, and of Europe in general, is in every respect correct, why should we entertain any doubt as to his veracity when he is referring to unknown things? Is it surprising that, under these circumstances, his eager audience, sadly impressed by the melancholy picture the Portuguese sailor unrolls of the position of England, should importune him for a description of that wonderful island where the peace-loving and righteous man breathes freely? Thus, in the most natural manner in the world the reader is prepared for a regular account of Utopia.

Nor is it only for the vivid and animated dialogues that the style

of More's masterpiece deserves special mention. There is in his fiction that subtle irony, that tender humour, those brilliant flashes of wit that so typically and characteristically reflect More's nature, but there is also in it that biting satire which strikes deeper than the most direct and fierce attack.<sup>1)</sup> We have before us the inimitable picture of King Utopus in Gueudeville's edition of *Utopia* who does not, like other princes, wear a crown or a diadem, but who is only distinguished from his subjects by a little sheaf of corn that is carried before him.<sup>2)</sup> It is in this playful and jocular manner that More wants to express his dislike of pomp and ostentation. Yet a more observant reader who penetrates beneath the surface of things, cannot fail to notice that the author seldom indulges in what may be called idle jesting. For this More is far too intellectual; his satire is not meant to create a humorous situation only, it strikes deeper. Thus in the picture of the ruler of his fantastic State, who carries a sheaf of corn as an emblem of royal dignity, More wants to convey to his King that he ought to pay more attention to the wretched peasant classes and that he ought to identify himself with the agricultural interest. How fine a satire on the splendour of Henry VIII do we find in the description of the visit of the Anemolian ambassadors to Utopia.<sup>3)</sup> We described

1) Campbell has collected some of his pointed sayings to illustrate his powers of wit and humour. (See *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXIII. pp. 75—77). I cannot refrain from giving a few here. More observed that "to aim at honour in this world is to set a coat of arms over a prison gate." A covetous old man he compared to a thief who steals when he is on his way to the gallows. Sir Thomas Manners, with whom he had been very familiar when a boy, was created Earl of Rutland about the same time that More was made Lord Chancellor. Being much puffed up by his elevation, he said to More (who had still remained a simple Knight), "Honores mutant Mores." "The proper translation of which," said the imperturbable Chancellor, "is, *Honours change Manners.*"

2) Churton Collins's edition of *Utopia*. Bk. II. Ch. VII. p. 105. "Nor the prince hymselfe is not knowen from the other by his apparel, nor by a crown or diadem or cappe of maintenance, but by a littell sheffe of corne carried before hym. And so a taper of wax is borne before the byshop, whereby only he is knowen."

3) See *Utopia*, Bk. II. Ch. VI.



this episode elsewhere, but would in this place again draw the reader's attention to Gueudeville's edition <sup>1)</sup> with the vivid illustration of this delightful scene.

It has been remarked that the two books of the *Utopia* might have been written by two different authors. He who maintains this, proves that he cannot truly appreciate the style of the romance. The first part is absolutely indispensable to put the reader in the proper frame of mind and serves to prepare him for the actual and great subject : *Utopia*. It is by means of these two books that More has, in an admirable manner, given an air of vraisemblance to the whole, by cleverly combining the real (Bk. I.) and the imaginary (Bk. II.). This fable about different authorship probably got into the world, because the books were written at two different periods. The second was composed by More, whilst on his embassy to the Low Countries, in the latter part of 1515 ; the first was begun and completed after his return to England. It was called forth by the peculiar situation in which its writer was placed, and developed somewhat under the following circumstances. Henry VIII, who had a very high opinion of More's abilities, was importuning him to enter his service. More, who could not by any means approve of the King's policy and who rightly anticipated serious difficulties in case he should have to devote himself to public life, made all sorts of excuses, entreating Henry to reconsider his decision. He struggled, but struggled in vain, and seeing that he could not stave off the unwelcome moment, he resolved to make the best use of the period of comparative liberty to express his feelings about the sad state of his country, but above all to explain to the King how it was that "no one ever tried harder to get admitted to Court than he did to keep out of it." <sup>2)</sup> With these purposes in view he wrote the first book of *Utopia*, in which he made the Portuguese

1) N. Gueudeville, *L'Utopie*, trad. en Franç. Leide, 1715.

2) Erasmus to Hutten. Epist. CCCCXLVII.

traveller the mouthpiece of his own thoughts. It is through Hythloday that More expressed with great plainness his opinion about the arbitrary despotism of a monarch who would turn a deaf ear to his advices. Thus clearly and honestly, without the least flattery did the writer, whom the King was practically forcing into his service, expose the shortcomings and the follies of which his monarch was guilty. If the King would not let him go, More reasoned, he was to know the real views and aims of the man he was summoning to his councils. That the work did not lose by the addition of a new part, that it rather gained in freshness and interest, does infinite credit to the writer. All this, however, was lost upon Michelet, and we wonder how he could justify his most unfavourable judgment. Criticisms like his are dangerous and misleading; for people are apt to take things for granted and do not think it necessary to inquire for themselves. It is doubtful whether Michelet was sufficiently aware of this fact when he passed his withering critique on More's romance. We can only conclude that Michelet, who was otherwise a serious worker, had made a superficial study of More's fiction and that he had, in this case, greatly underrated the importance of his task. We that have considered the *Utopia* from different standpoints, have come to a more favourable conclusion. What strikes us especially is the freshness and interest of the material, the clearness and detail of its analyses, its wonderful construction and its originality of thought. In his endeavours to write a vivid and stimulating sketch of the social and political conditions of his time, More has perfectly succeeded. Even in our days, the *Utopia* is consulted as a reliable authority for the conditions of England under its most notorious Tudor King. More's creation, far from being a stale romance, is a work of genius, a worthy illustration of his political acuteness and his practical sagacity, but also of his high sense of duty and noble fearlessness in the cause of right and justice.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### MORE'S LAST YEARS.

In the seventh chapter on *The Apology*, we discussed the chief events of More's Chancellorship, namely his attitude to the Reformation and his persecution of the Reformers. We would here devote our attention to the circumstances that led to his tragical and untimely death, first of all because this sad episode throws full light on the innate nobility of his character, but also because it will provide us with ample and valuable material for a true and correct understanding of the relation between the King and his subject. On the accession of Henry VIII (1509), More welcomed the young monarch in a Latin poem, the *Carmen Gratulatorium*, in which he eulogised the gentleness, the clemency and the humanity of his new Lord and Master, which eulogy, especially as far as the King's humanity is concerned, reads strangely in the light of after-history.<sup>1)</sup> In the same year More attracted the young monarch's notice by presenting to him an elaborate epithalamium on the occasion of the King's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. More was enthusiastic in his praise of Henry's affabilities and courtesy, while the King on his side, charmed by More's witty conversation, treated him with exceptional familiarity. Yet in spite of the King's attachment to him, More seemed to have had a foreboding of coming evil, which

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1) For poem see Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, London, 1868. Vol. II. Ch. XXXI, p. 11. Campbell remarks, "Little did the poet foresee that this was to be the most tyrannical and bloody reign in the annals of England, and that he himself was to be doomed to a cruel death by him whose clemency he celebrates."

2) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 119.



"spirit of prophecie was no doubt a signe of God's love unto Sir Thomas," as his great-grandson remarked. Speaking about royal favour, he had once observed to his son-in-law Roper, "I have no cause to be proude thereof, for if my head would buy him (the King) a castle in France, it should not faile to go of." <sup>1)</sup> Thus, with quick discernment he had pierced into the nature of a man who only meant to show favour as long as it served his purpose. Yet for some years to come, More had no reason to doubt the King's feelings towards him : he rapidly rose to distinction, his services being duly acknowledged and appreciated. Troubles did not begin, as far as I have been able to gather, before September 1527, when the King spoke for the first time about his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and his intended union with Anne Boleyn, on which occasion More announced that he was unable to agree with the King's views. <sup>2)</sup> There is every proof to assume that at that time at all events the King did not resent his answer, for in 1529 More was promoted to the high office of Lord Chancellor, the first layman on whom this dignity had ever been conferred. <sup>3)</sup> But in spite of honours and preferment, More felt that his doom was at hand. He knew the King as a man of a most intense and imperious will, and did not flatter himself that on this occasion his sovereign should not make use of any means at his disposal of gratifying his inclinations. Subsequent events have confirmed that Henry did not shrink from taking the most drastic measures to attain his end. On February 11, 1530 he

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1) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 55. Commenting on this passage, Campbell observes, „This authentic anecdote shows in a very striking manner how More had penetrated the intense selfishness, levity, heartlessness, and insensibility to remorse which constituted the character of the King." (Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXI, p. 21).

2) See Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXI, p. 22. "More's sentiments on King's divorce."

3) To form a correct estimate of More's merits as Lord Chancellor, it is imperative to consult Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXII. "Life of Sir Thomas More from his appointment as Lord Chancellor till his resignation."

ordered the clergy to recognise him "as far as the law of Christ will allow supreme head of the Church." <sup>1)</sup> Nor was this all. Soon after a bill was brought in to suspend the payment of first fruits to the papacy. More felt that he could no longer maintain an attitude of neutrality. The moment had come for him to show his high indignation at this usurpation of the spiritual power. When Sir George Throckmorton spoke against the bill, More commended his attitude privately and vigorously opposed the proposal in the council (May 13, 1532). When, in addition to this, the King suggested to relax the laws of heresy, he strongly expressed his dislike of these non-catholic measures, and More, finding his position untenable, resigned. In this manner an end was put to his splendid career, but unlike his predecessor Cardinal Wolsey, who was crushed by his fall, More willingly and gladly retired into privacy. His feelings on the occasion he lays bare to his friend Erasmus, to whom he writes as follows, "That which I have from a childe unto this day almost continually wished, my most deare Desiderius, that being freed from the troublesome businesses of publike affayres, I might live some while only to God and myselfe, I have now by the especiall grace of almightie God, and the favour of my most indulgent prince, obtayned." <sup>2)</sup> Indeed, the year after his resignation he spent most in spiritual exercises. There is for me every reason to believe that the remarkable process of spiritualization during his imprisonment, which his correspondence with his daughter Margaret enables us to follow in all its different phases, began already at an earlier date : his conversation with his wife and children clearly pointing in this direction. With them he would talk of the joys of Heaven, of the blissful lives of holy martyrs, what torments they endured for the love of God. He told them what a blessed thing it would be to follow their example and how gladly he would, for the love of God,

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1) Particulars I owe to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. (See More).

2) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 193.

suffer imprisonment, loss of goods and life also.<sup>1)</sup> A man who expresses these sentiments, has done with worldly affairs and is preparing himself for life hereafter. His ever increasing contempt of worldly honour is likewise an outcome of his feelings. A man who now writes of his *Utopia* that he judges the book "no better worthie than to lye alwaies hidden in his owne island, or else to be consecrated to Vulcan"<sup>2)</sup> shows that a great psychological change has come over him.

His future troubles he prophesied to his wife and children not to cause them unnecessary grief, but rather to prepare them for the miseries that might befall him, and he fervently prayed that they would encourage him to die in a good cause rather than dissuade him from doing so.<sup>3)</sup> We shall soon have occasion to refer to this discourse in connection with the petition of 1534. In the meantime dark clouds were fast gathering in every direction. More had steadfastly refused to attend the coronation of Henry's second wife (1 June, 1533). Commenting on his absence, More anticipated the evil consequences of his deed as follows, "God give grace, that these matters within a while be not confirmed with oathes."<sup>4)</sup> Then followed the Nun of Kent episode, of which mention must be made here to show the King's altered feelings; how, by terrors and threats he now strove to win More to his side. We know the story of the Nun of Kent: how she had declared that if Henry persisted in his resolution of marrying Anne Boleyn, she was commissioned by God to tell him that he should lose his power and authority. More was also involved in this affair, but was able to prove that he had warned her "not to meddle in affairs of kings, but to devote herself to pious exercises," which account was corro-

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1) *Life by his Great Grandson*, Ch. VIII. "The first occasion and beginning of Sir Thomas his troubles."

2) Letter to Erasmus, see *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 195.

3) *Life by his Great Grandson*, Ch. VIII. p. 296.

4) *Ibid.*, p. 201.



borated by her own confessions and those of her accomplices.<sup>1)</sup> Nevertheless the King was not satisfied and More was found guilty of misprision of treason. He, however, applied for permission to address the House in his defence. So great was his popularity that the King agreed, though reluctantly, to strike the name out of the bill. The prophecy uttered on the occasion of the Queen's wedding was to be fulfilled sooner than More had perhaps expected. On the 30th of March, 1534 a bill imposing an oath of adherence to the new act of succession, which vested the crown in Anne Boleyn's issue, received the royal assent, and on the 13th of April of the same year More had to appear by summons at Lambeth before the commissioners Cranmer, Audley (who had succeeded him as Lord Chancellor), Cromwell and Benson, abbot of Westminster. He there declared that, while ready to swear fidelity to the new succession act, he could take no oath that should impugn the Pope's authority or assume the justice of the divorce, saying "that he neither would find fault with the oath, nor with the authors of it, nor would blame the conscience of any man that had taken it, but for himselfe he could not take it without endangering his soul of eternal damnation."<sup>2)</sup> He solemnly declared that this was the chief cause of his refusal. He was then asked whether he could swear to the succession, to which he replied that if he could do so without danger of perjury or with a safe conscience, he could have no objection.<sup>3)</sup> The King, probably on the instigation of Queen Anne, who was highly incensed against him, declined to accept the oath of fidelity and on the 17th of April More was committed to the Tower, where he remained a prisoner till death.

This episode in More's life requires some elucidation. It is generally assumed that Sir Thomas More was committed to the Tower for

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1) See Froude's *History* Vol. II. p. 101. "The Nun of Kent."

2) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 221.

3) *Ibid.* p. 224.

refusing to take the oath of supremacy, but the reason is that he (and many others with him) could not be persuaded to take the oath of succession *in the form tendered to him*. His refusal was founded upon the circumstance that the oath in its present form imposed assertions of the invalidity of the King's first marriage, and of the validity of his second, and of his divorce from Queen Catherine. If these assertions had been excluded, More would have taken the oath, for he admitted the right of Parliament to alter the succession to the throne at pleasure. All this is expounded in an interesting article, entitled *Inedited Documents relating to the Imprisonment and Condemnation of Sir Thomas More: Communicated by John Bruce, Esq. F. S. A. in a Letter to Thomas Amyot, Esq. F. R. S. Treasurer S. A.* <sup>1)</sup> To this very same question More's great-grandson refers in his vivid sketch of More before his judges at Lambeth <sup>2)</sup>, when the Lord Chancellor impatiently remarked, "See, Mr. Secretarie, he will not sweare to that, but under a certain form of words." To which Sir Thomas replied, "No truly, except I finde that I may sweare it without danger of perjurie, and with a safe conscience." <sup>3)</sup> After this the King consulted with his council and it was resolved that More should be discharged whether he had sworn to the supremacy or not. More's biographer, however, adds, "Yet did Queen Anne by her importunate clamours so sore exasperate the King against him, that contrarie to the King's former resolution (but indeede for the greater honour of God, and his martyr) the King caused againe the oath of Supremacie to be ministered unto him" <sup>4)</sup>, and More was forthwith committed to the Tower.

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1) *Archaeologia*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 361—374.

2) *Life by his Great Grandson*, Ch. IX. "The Refusall of the oath of Supremacy".

3) *Ibid.* p. 224.

4) *Ibid.* p. 225.

At the end of December 1534 Lady More petitioned the King for her husband's pardon and release on the ground of his sickness <sup>1)</sup> and her poverty. <sup>2)</sup> This petition together with another document of historical value (the indictment against More) will be found in Mr. Bruce's article mentioned above. Though we ought to be grateful to this gentleman for drawing our attention to these remarkable documents, I must confess the writer startled me somewhat by his subsequent remarks about them. Mr. Bruce thinks it likely that the letter was not written by More's wife at all, but by More himself. "In its form this document", he says, "bears considerable resemblance to the early bills in Chancery, and from that circumstance, and also from the style of the composition, it may be inferred that it was probably written by Sir Thomas More himself." <sup>3)</sup> It is a pity that Mr. Bruce did not work out his arguments in favour of this standpoint. If the petition was actually drawn up by Sir Thomas More himself, all I can say is that he thoroughly understood the psychology of women and that he hit the style and tone of a distressed wife pleading for the life of her husband wonderfully well. However, I have every reason to assume that whoever drew up the petition, it was certainly not More. To this conclusion I have come after a careful perusal of the letters written by More to his daughter Margaret during the period of his imprisonment. This correspondence clearly proves that More had never wished any of his relatives to ask a favour of the King and that he had never intended to do so himself. When his dearly beloved daughter

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1) Whilst in prison More suffered from oppression on the chest, gravel, and cramp.

2) After his resignation More had to live on some £100.— a year; he left his high post a poor man, a rare thing in those days when the taking of bribes was common. He likewise magnanimously refused the gift of £5000.— offered him by convocation for his defence of the Church against heresy. (See *Apology*, Cap. X).

3) *Documents relating to the Imprisonment and Condemnation of Sir Thomas More in Archaeologia*, Vol. XXVII. p. 363.



Margaret beseeches him to take the oath <sup>1)</sup>, he straightway answers her, speaking of her "lamentable letter" which "had not a little abashed him." <sup>2)</sup> "Nothing grieved me more," he continues, "than to see you, my beloved childe, in such vehement piteous maner, labour to persuade unto me, a thing wherein I have of pure necessitie for respect unto myne owne soule, so often given you so precise aunswere before." <sup>3)</sup> I believe that More is here hinting at his discourses at home, shortly before he was committed to the Tower, in which he anticipated his troubles and solemnly declared that he was ready to suffer for the love of God in a good and just cause. <sup>4)</sup> When Margaret promises her father that she shall never grieve him any more by such like requests assuring him that she admires his worthy conduct and loves him all the more for it, More expresses his gratitude to God in these words, "He of his high goodnes geveth you the grace to consider the incōparable differēce betwene the wretched estate of this present lyfe and the welthy state of the lyfe to come." <sup>5)</sup> Is it likely that this man would request his wife to present a petition to the King, written by himself and to be copied by her? Do not these epistles give evidence that their writer was utterly weary of life and that he was longing for death? "I beseeche God make you all mery in the hope of heaven." <sup>6)</sup> "For as for longe life (as I have often tolde thē Megge) I neyther looke for, nor long for, but I am wel content to goe, yf God call me hence to-morowe." <sup>6)</sup> All he begs of his family (and his correspondence in

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1) *English Workes*, p. 1431, § C.

2) *Ibid.* p. 1431, § D.

3) *Ibid.* p. 1431, § D.

4) I am confirmed in this supposition by a letter from Margaret written in 1534 in which she comments on his sad fate as follows, "But father, this chaunce was not straunge to you. For I shal not forgeat how you tolde us when we were with you in the gardeyne, that these thinges were like ynoughe to chaunce you shortly after." (*English Workes*, p. 1446, §§ D & E).

5) *English Workes*, Letter to Margaret, p. 1449, § B.

6) *Ibid.* Letter to Margaret, p. 1431, § A.

prison bears this out) is not to intercede for him, and not to grieve for his sake, but to trust in God. Far from agreeing with Mr. Bruce, that More should ever have written the petition, I rather take the opposite view and give as my opinion that More, if he had been informed of his wife's intention, would certainly not have approved of it. How preposterous the thought must be of viewing More in the light of a petitioner for his own liberty, may further appear from his words spoken to the King's counsellors in the Tower. When he is assured that the King means well by him, that he is even inclined to set him free, More answers, "I would never medle in the worlde agayne, to have the worlde geven me", and further, "I had fullye determined with my selfe, neyther to studye nor medle wyth anye matter of this world, but that my whole study should be upon the passiō of Christ, and mine own passage out of this worlde."<sup>1)</sup> And again I ask: could it be supposed that a man who speaks like this, would persuade his wife to ask for his release? On the 16th of January, 1534, More wrote to a priest, called Leder, "It hath bene shewed me, that I am reckened wylfull and obstinate, because that synce my commyng hether, I have not wrytten unto the Kynges hyghnesse, and by myne own writing made some sute unto his grace."<sup>2)</sup> Would this man, who was firmly determined *not* to beg any favour of the King, ask his wife to do so, and prepare the letter for her? On the information gathered from More's correspondence, I believe Mr. Bruce's theory is hardly tenable.<sup>3)</sup> The truth is that More did not want to have his fate reversed; liberty he did not

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1) *English Workes*, p. 1452, § A.

2) *Ibid.* p. 1450, § G.

3) If these letters should not be convincing, I may refer to the memorable meeting between More and his wife in prison, when she tried hard to persuade him to take the oath, and he, to no purpose, tried to convince her that it was better to remain in the Tower than to dishonour himself. See Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXIII, p. 56.

wish for, he prayed God that he might soon be released from his earthly troubles.

There is another reason why these letters deserve our close attention. They give us a clear insight into the ignoble practices and the wily methods of his enemies who meant, by all policies possible, to get him either to acknowledge the supremacy, or precisely to deny it. For a correct estimation of facts it is necessary to add that Parliament had conferred on Henry the title of Supreme Head of the Church and rendered it high treason to "maliciously" deny any of the royal title. The methods adopted by the counsellors can only prove how little the King understood the true nature and character of his faithful servant. Through his counsellors he would reproach More either with obstinacy or with ingratitude, and would frequently remind him of the many favours and benefits he had bestowed on him. All the King asked was that his wilful subject should now do him a kindness in return and take the oath. It is obvious how utterly incapable Henry was of appreciating an upright nature like More's. Evidently the King did not understand that what was practically little more than a commercial transaction to him, was a matter of life and death to his loyal servant.<sup>1)</sup>

The end was now drawing near. In April 1535 Cromwell went to the Tower and asked More for his opinion of the new statutes. An indictment was preferred against Sir Thomas, upon which he was put to death. Sir James Mackintosh remarks that "it is lamentable that the records of the proceedings against such a man

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1) More's standpoint is clearly illustrated by several passages in his letters. To him the taking of the oath was certainly "no mere trifle, but a perilous thyng towards the soule." (*English workes*, p. 1437, § B.) "He could not offend God by swearing ungodly against his own conscience" (p. 1435, § C.) When reflecting upon the consequences of his deed, he remarks, "In the saving of my body should stande the losse of my soule." (p. 1448, § B.) The King misunderstands him, when calling him "an obstinate subject. . . . I thanke our lord that the thyng that I do, is not for obstinacye, but for the salvacion of my soule, because I cannot enduce myne owne minde, otherwise to think than I doe concerning the othe." (p. 1450, § E.)



should be scanty. We do not certainly know the specific offence of which he was convicted." <sup>1)</sup> This deficiency, however, is supplied by John Bruce, who appends to his article a copy of the original indictment, which is almost unreadable on account of its frequent reiterations and its innumerable number of participles. Nevertheless it is a document of great historical value, because it contains an enumeration of the charges on which More was sentenced to death. What these charges come to, may appear from the verdict of the jurors which follows here. „*Sicque juratores predicti dicunt, quod prefatus Thomas More false, proditorie, et maliciose, arte imaginavit, inventavit, practitavit, et attemptavit prefatum serenissimum Dominum nostrum Regem de dictis dignitate, titulo et nomine Supremi Capitis in terra Anglicane Ecclesie penitus deprivere, in ipsius Domini Regis contemptum manifestum, et corone sue regie derogationem, contra formam et effectum statutorum predictorum, et contra pacem ejusdem Domini Regis.*" <sup>2)</sup> The record ends with the names of the petty jurors by whom Sir Thomas More was found guilty, and the entry of the frightful sentence of the Law in cases of Treason. <sup>3)</sup> We wonder on what evidence the charges brought against him, were based. They were chiefly based on the following conversation between More and Rich, the King's solicitor-general. After having praised More for his wisdom and learning, Rich suddenly put the question (evidently with a view of extorting from his victim a direct expression of opinion), "Admit there were an Act of Parliament, that all the Realm should take me for the King, would not you take me for the King?" More, having answered in the affirmative, the question was put, "Suppose there were an Act of Parliament that all the Realm should take me for the Pope, would then not you, Mr. More take me for the Pope?" To which

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1) Mackintosh, *Life of Sir Thomas More*, p. 97.

2) *Archaeologia*, Vol. XXVII., p. 374.

3) *Ibid.* p. 368.

More replied that Parliament had full power to "meddle with the state of temporal princes", and continued, "Suppose the Parliament would made a law, that God should not be God, would you then, Mr. Rich, say God were not God?" When Rich observed that no Parliament could make any such law, More concluded, "No more could the Parliament make the King supreme head of the Church." <sup>1)</sup> It is chiefly on this report that Sir Thomas More was accused of high treason, into which indictment these words were put, "false, proditorie et maliciose." Sad adversity that a man, who, only a few years ago had gathered his judges about him to teach them lessons of probity and impartiality, was now sentenced and condemned on the evidence of a gambler and a liar. Considered from a modern point of view, it is almost incredible that Thomas More, who had filled the most dignified office in the State, should have been doomed to an ignominious death upon pretences such as these. He himself heard the charges with the composure and the resignation of a man who had anticipated this fatal issue for years. In a splendid defence and with much dignity he denied the principal charges. Rich, the solicitor-general, he denounced as a perjurer, speaking these memorable words, "In good fayth, Mr. Rich, I am more sorie for your perjurie then for mine own perill." <sup>2)</sup> Before leaving the court, and after having received sentence of death, More addressed his judges as follows, "When I perceaved that the King's pleasure was to sifte out, from whence the Pope's authoritie was derived, I confesse I studyed seaven yeares togeather to finde out the truthe thereof, and I could not reade in anie one Doctour's writings, which the Church alloweth, anie one saying that avoucheth

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1) Roper's *Life of Sir Thomas More in the Utopia* edited by Maurice Adams in the Camelot Series, p. 50.

2) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 250.

For a more elaborate account of the charges in the indictment, the infamous conduct of Rich, and More's defence, consult *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXIII., pp. 59—64.

that a lay man was or could ever be the head of the Church." <sup>1)</sup>

What a sentence for high treason meant, to what ignominious death the victim was doomed, shall not be said here. Suffice it to add that it was by the King commuted into simple beheading. When this "favour" was communicated to More as a special instance of royal clemency, he answered with his ready and never failing wit, "God forbid that the King should show any more mercy unto any of my friends, and God blesse all my posterity from such pardons." <sup>2)</sup> To keep up this strain of bitter irony, we are bound to say that the King's mercy did not end here. He not only seized on More's property under the law confiscating to the crown the estate of traitors, but he had a special Act of Parliament passed for the purpose of annulling a settlement which More had made upon his children. All he allowed to his widow was a pension of £ 20.—a year.

As to More himself, we can only marvel at the fortitude with which he bore all his troubles. Amidst his sorrows he behaved as if he were not the sufferer : it was he who had to console his daughter, who, breaking through the crowd, and rushing to her father, without consideration or care for herself, embraced him, and kissed him, not able to say anything but, "Oh, my father, o my father." <sup>3)</sup>

Who shall describe the feelings of inexpressible sorrow when he had to take a last farewell of his dearly beloved daughter under circumstances so extremely tragical ? It was More again, who had to console his old friend, Mr. Pope, who, overcome with grief, burst into tears when he had to announce the hour of his execution. "Quiet yourself, Mr. Pope," he said, "and be not discomfited, for I trust we shall once see eache other full merrily, where we shall be sure to live and love togeather in eternall blisse." <sup>4)</sup> In the last letter

1) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 259.

2) *Ibid.* p. 258.

3) *Ibid.* p. 264.    4) *Ibid.* p. 271.



he ever wrote in life, addressed to his daughter and dated the 30th of June, 1535 (that is one day before his execution) he expressed his fervent desire that he should have to suffer the next day. "I comber you, good Margaret, much, but I would be sory, if it should be any longer than to-morrow. For it is saint Thomas even, and the Octave of St. Peter, and therefore to-morrow long I to go to God : it were a day verye mete and convenient for me" ; <sup>1)</sup> and then, referring to their last parting, he adds in fond remembrance, "I never liked your maner toward me better than when you kissed me laste : for I love when doughterly love and deere charitye hath no lasure to loke to worldlye curtesy." <sup>2)</sup>

It would be superfluous to give a circumstantial account of More's execution. Of his tragical death a most pathetic picture has been given by his biographers, <sup>3)</sup> and also Froude has devoted some impressive passages to the same event. <sup>4)</sup> During his dying moments his behaviour was such as will probably be without parallel in history. The scaffold had been awkwardly erected, and shook as he placed his foot upon the ladder. Commenting on this, More said in a gay tone to the Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir William Kingston, "I pray you, Sir, see me safe up, and for my coming down, let me shift for myselfe." <sup>5)</sup> When the fatal stroke was about to fall, he bade the executioner wait till he had moved aside his beard, saying that "that had never committed anie treason." <sup>6)</sup> This touch of humour so eminently characteristic, I could not allow myself to suppress. Thus his imperturbable cheerfulness and sense of humour did not desert him even under the most lugubrious circumstances,

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1) *English Workes*, p. 1457, § H.

2) *Ibid.* p. 1458.

3) See among others *Life of More by his Great Grandson*, Ch. XI. "The Holy Death and Glorious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More."

4) Froude, *History of England*, 1861. Vol. II, p. 233.

5) *Life by his Great Grandson*, p. 274.

6) *Ibid.* p. 275.

and it was in this strange and unprecedented manner that he obeyed the command of the King who had enjoined him "not to use many words at his execution." <sup>1)</sup>

Let us not inquire whether the King alone was responsible for his death. Was it really Anne Boleyn, who, incensed at his neglect had instigated the King to reconsider his plan? What, if she had not interfered? Would More's life have been spared then and would an exception have been made in his case when the oath of supremacy was exacted from so many other eminent men in the realm? All we know is that More had to be sacrificed and that the King wanted his life. This appears from the indictment, the unfair construction put upon More's words and the other iniquities with which it abounds. Even Froude admits that his sentence was little more than a travesty of justice, when he says, "The pageant was over, for such a trial was little more." <sup>2)</sup> Indeed a pageant it was and the coolness and calmness with which the judges and the petty jurors by whom Sir Thomas More was found guilty, ignored their responsibility, would be an occasion for derision, if it were not an opportunity for indignation. <sup>3)</sup> In order to allay the threatening excitement caused by his death, Henry VIII thought it necessary to offer to the world some explanation of his conduct and a kind of defence of his attitude, which he did through his minister Cromwell. The latter declared that his sovereign had been compelled to imprison such men as Sir Thomas More and the Bishop of Rochester as rebellious subjects, as disturbers of the public peace and as movers of sedition and tumult. <sup>4)</sup> Cromwell should not have uttered these

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1) Sir Thomas Pope to More. See *Life*, p. 270.

2) Froude's *History*, Vol. II., p. 231.

3) Commenting upon the trial, Campbell says, "Considering the splendour of his talents, the greatness of his acquirements, and the innocence of his life, we must still regard his murder as the blackest crime that ever has been perpetrated in England under the forms of law." (Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXIII, p. 59.)

4) Froude's *History*, Vol. II. p. 240.

falsehoods, because he knew better. Thomas More was certainly no rebellious and seditious subject. Passages from his letters prove conclusively that he wanted to leave everybody free to take the oath or not. "I never gave anye man counsell to the contrary in my dayes, nor never used anye wayes to putte anye scruple in other folkes conscience concerning the matter," he wrote to doctor Nicholas Wylson in 1534 <sup>1)</sup>; and he expressed the same sentiments in a letter to a Roman Catholic priest (dated January 16, 1534), when he solemnly declared, "I am very sure in my mind that I shall never be hable to chaunge myne owne conscience to the contrary. *As for other mennes I wyll not meddle of.*" <sup>2)</sup> And this man was condemned as a rioter and as a mover of sedition! To Cromwell, who accused More of seditious purposes, of treason and malice <sup>3)</sup>, the case appeared so clear as to require no apology. To us who have perused More's correspondence during his imprisonment, the case is so clear as to admit of none. Could More, by his refusal, have imperilled the position of the King? To this question More refers in a letter of the 2nd or 3rd of May, 1535. "Master Secretary said that my demeasure in this matter was a thing, that of likelyhode made other so stiffe <sup>4)</sup> therein as they be." <sup>5)</sup> To which More replied that he had never advised or counselled any man to follow his example, adding, "I doo no body no harme, I say none harme, I thynke none harme, but wishe everye bodye good, and if this be not ynoughe to kepe a manne alyve, in good fayth I long not to lyve." <sup>6)</sup> Surely this is not the language of a man who would prove a danger to the State or who would imperil the King's position. Henry VIII might have put more faith in the words spoken by a

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1) *English Workes*, p. 1443, § D.

2) *Ibid.* p. 1450, § G. (*Italics are mine.*)

3) Compare Cromwell's letter to Cassalis in Froude's *History*, Vol. II. p. 240.

4) Obstinate.

5) *English Workes*, p. 1452. § C.

6) *Ibid.* p. 1452. § D.



subject whose veracity was above suspicion. The King might have requited his invaluable services by making an experiment and spare his life. If ever he should have cause to repent his deed, it would be a matter of no great difficulty to correct his mistake ! Let us bear in mind that *on moral grounds* the King could never have condemned his subject. For, when Henry, angered at his obstinacy, informed him that he "had been occasion of much grudge and harme in the realme and that he had an obstinate mind and an evill towards him (the King) and that he forgot his duty towards his prince," <sup>1)</sup> all More could do was to remind the King of their conversation on his first entering the royal household. "I was very sure that I had no corrupt affection, but that I had alway fro the begynning truly used myself, looking first upon God, and next upon the King, accordinge to the lesson that hys hyghnes taught me at my fyrst cumming to his noble service, the most vertuous lesson that ever prince taught his servāt." <sup>2)</sup> That Henry VIII did not shrink from sacrificing one of his most eminent subjects, must perhaps be ascribed to his passionate and imperious character, but that he enforced the confiscation of what small property More had left and that he expelled Lady More from her house at Chelsea, stamps him as a vindictive and despicable tyrant, who was not yet satisfied by the judicial murder of his friend and servant. More himself had evidently not anticipated that the King should stoop to this, when, speaking about his wife, he wrote to his daughter Margaret, "I verely beleve in good faith that the Kynges grace of hys benigne pittie will take nothing from her." <sup>3)</sup> It was this King

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1) *English Workes.* p. 1453. § B.

2) *Ibid.* p. 1453. § E (letter to Margaret). The same sentiments he expressed to his friend, doctor Nicholas Wylson, commenting on the King's words as follows, "neither a more indifferent commaudemēt nor a more gracious lesson, could ther in my mynde never Kyng geve to hys counsaylour or anye his other servant." (*English Workes*, p. 1444. § A.)

3) *Ibid.* p. 1447. § A.

of whom More, whilst suffering in prison, was speaking in terms of the highest favour, this King for whose preservation he was praying every day.<sup>1)</sup>

Thomas More was no saint, he can hardly be exculpated from the charge of cruelty to heretics — nevertheless we must rank him among the noblest minds of England. He was a man with a stern devotion to principles, with invincible courage, and greatness of soul, but above all with an overmastering religious fervour. He died with the dignity of a philosopher and the faith of a martyr.<sup>2)</sup> I cannot more fitly conclude than with a portion of Addison's essay on More, "His Death was of a piece with his Life. There was nothing in it new, forced, or affected. He did not look upon the severing of his Head from his Body as a Circumstance that ought to produce any Change in the Disposition of his Mind ; and as he died under a fixed and settled Hope of Immortality, he thought any unusual degree of Sorrow and Concern improper on such an Occasion, as had nothing in it which could deject or terrify him."<sup>3)</sup>

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1) *English Workes*, p. 1445. § C. "Like the King's true pore hūble subject, I dayly pray for the preservacion of hys Grace and the quenes grace and theyr noble issue, and of all the realme, without harme doing or entending (I thanke our lord) unto any man living."

2) Campbell, who devotes some beautiful lines to More's character, concludes his account, "With all my Protestant zeal, I must feel a higher reverence for Sir Thomas More than for Thomas Cromwell or for Cranmer." (*Lives of the Chance'llors*, Vol. II. Ch. XXXIII. p. 69).

3) *The Spectator*, No. 349.

## APPENDIX

- I. FACSIMILE OF A PASSAGE FROM THE APOLOGY
- II. EXTRACTS FROM THE APOLOGY
- III. PLAYS DEALING WITH SIR THOMAS MORE
- IV. BIBLIOGRAPHY
- V. SKETCHES OF THE ISLANDS OF ATLANTIS AND UTOPIA





## APPENDIX I

### FACSIMILE OF A PASSAGE FROM THE APOLOGY

For I selfe haue good experience of the.  
for the lies are neither fewe nor small,  
that many of the blessed brethren haue  
made, and daily yet make by me.

Quiers of thevyn haue saide that of

childe his bugracione heresse against the  
blessed sacrament of the aulter, which be-  
refuse this childe afterwarde, beyng in  
seruice with me, beganne to teache ano-  
ther childe in my house, whiche bittered  
his counsaile. And vppon that poynte  
perceiued and knowen, I caused a ser-  
uant of mine to stryppen hym lyke a  
childe before myne householde, for a men-  
dement of himself, and ensample of such  
other

so muche as a syllyppe on the forehead.  
And some haue sayde that whan Co-  
stantine was gotten a way, I was falle  
for anger in a wonderfull rage. But sure-  
ly though I would be not haue suffered  
him go if it would haue pleased hym to  
haue tarped sty in the strokes, yet whā  
he was neither so feble for lack of meate  
but that he was strong enough to break  
the strokes, nor ware to lame of his leg.





## APPENDIX II.

THE APOLOGY IN SIR THOMAS MORE'S "WORKES." 1557. Vol. II.

*The apology of Syr Thomas More Knight, made by hym. Anno. 1533. after that he had geven over thoffice of lord chauncellour of Englande.*

In this chapter More declares that whatever he writes is "conso- CAP. I.  
nant unto the comon catholike fayth and determinacions of Chrystes  
Catholike church, and are cleare confutations of false blasphemous  
heresies by Tindall and Barnes." (p. 845)<sup>1</sup> More is afraid that his  
adversaries will not study his work on account of its prolixity.  
"For they (viz. Tindall and Barnes) fynd first for a great faulte  
that my wryting is over long, and therfore too tedious to reade.  
For which cause they saye, they wyll never once vouchsafe to loke  
theron."

More apologises for the length of his work, explains that "it is CAP. II.  
a shorter thyng and soner done to wryte heresies than to answer  
them. For the most folishe heretyke in a towne, maye wryte moe  
false heresyces in one leafe than the wysest man in the whole  
world can..... confute in forty." (p. 847<sup>u</sup>)

Why heretics will not read controversies; why they object to CAP. III.  
the length of his work, "for they thinke all thyngs too longe,"  
also the different rites in the Roman Catholic Church.

Virulent attack on Tyndale's translation of the Bible, "false CAP. IV.  
translacyon," which "trewe catholike people call very false pestilent

heresies." (p. 849<sup>1</sup>) This chapter is of importance for theological researches. Why More condemns the translation. It is not necessary for the salvation of our souls that "scripture be in englishe." (p. 849<sup>u</sup>) Other reasons assigned (people cannot read, &c.). Tyndale came forth "with hys newe translated scrypture translatynge the truethe of Chryste into false Luthers heresies." (p. 850<sup>1</sup>).

## CAP. V.

A tedious and lengthy discussion on the confutation of Tyndale's Chapter "whether the Churche wer befor the worde <sup>1</sup>) or the worde before the Churche." (p. 850<sup>u</sup>) This chapter had, as More declares, already been confuted by him before, but his adversaries had wilfully left out important passages. Luther and Tyndale are mentioned in one breath and their works spoken of as "abominable heresies." (p. 852<sup>u</sup>). Follow Tyndale's words (pp. 852 and 853). Tyndale is of opinion that the "worde or ghospell is before the congregacion." This statement "of which the brethren are very proud," as More observes, is confuted in a lengthy passage. (p. 853<sup>u</sup>). False opinion of Luther and Tyndale "and all suche other heretykes, that they saye false in that they preache & teache that menne are bounden to believe nothyng but if it be written in bookes, sith God is at hys libertie to geve hys word into hys churche even at thys daye, by hys owne mouthe, thorow the inspiracion of his holye spirite sente therein." (p. 856 ).

## CAP. VI.

In which the question is raised, whether "in the construccion and exposicion of holy scripture, we should of reason better beleve holy saynt Austine (follows an enumeration of Church Fathers) or els on the tother syde Luther, Barns, Swinglius, Tindal, Baifield," &c. (p. 857<sup>u</sup>) and he continues (p. 858<sup>1</sup>) "let al these heretykes and al that beare them favoure, fynde oute among them al so muche as one of all the old holy saintes that so did construe the scripture,

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1) Word = Scripture.

as now these newe heretykes do for wedding of Monkes, Freres and Nunnes, whyche the whole catholyke church all thys fyftene hundred yeaere, before these late lewde heresies beganne, have ever more abhorred and holden for abominable, let these new brethren (I say) now fynde out among all, any one of the olde holy saintes that sayd the breache of theyr vowes was no syn, and then am I content they say that al the remanaunt be whole upon theyr part in all the remanaunt of all theyr poysoned heresyces." On the same page More speaks of "vowebreakynge brethren whyche thyng alone suffiseth for their ful condempnacion." Lambert, Tyndale, Swinglius "with al their adherents, be plaine abominable heretikes." (p. 858').

Tyndale is of opinion that God caused all necessary things to be written in scripture, More maintains that "ther is as great surety in the word of God unwrytten and taught unto the church by the spirit without the scripture as in his woorde wrytten in the scripture." (p. 859'). The scripture is known to the Church alone. CAP. VII.

Tyndale against the text of Saint James concerning the Sacrament of Baptism. (p. 860"). Tyndale calls the sacrament of Baptism "nothyngel but a bare gracelesse token." (p. 860"). More argues that man has to submit himself to that ablution "for the fulfyllunge of Goddes commaundement and ordinaunce." (p. 861). Distinction between "hystorycall faithe and feelinge faithe." (p. 862"). CAP. VIII.

More's hatred of heretics — why he uses opprobrious language. CAP. IX.  
 "People blame me for calling Tindall, Frythe and Barns heretyques and fooles, as though the menne hadde neyther witte nor learninge." (p. 863'). More then explains that in the defence of their heresies "they shewe so lyttle wytte or learninge either." "God hathe on Tyndall, Barns and Fryth, and those other heretyques, more shewed



his vengeance in some parte, then he dydde upon the dyvell. For in good faithe God hath, as it seemeth fro these folke taken awai the best part of their wyttes." (p. 863"). In the meantime those heretics "go busylye aboute to heape uppe to the skye theyr foule fylthye dunghyll of all olde and new false stynckyng heresyas, gathered uppe together agaynste the trewe catholike faithe of Christe." (pp. 863 and 864). Why More handles "these folke so foule", because he could "plainelye prove them abhominable heretiques, and against God and his sacraments and Saintes veri blasphemous fooles." (p. 864'). Why is he so harsh upon them? Just as well as the Macedonians under King Philip called a traitor a traitor, "so canne I not call a foole, but a foole, nor an heretique but an heretique." (p. 864"). In this respect More acknowledges Tyndale and Frith as his superiors, beause they call him a Poet in their writings, whereas "I canne neither so muche poetrye, nor so muche rhetorique neither, as to fynde good names for evyll thinges." Why he does not call Barns by the name of doctor. Because Barns was made doctor by the University when he was "meete to teache and not now when he is not meete to teache." (p. 864"). Why More detests heretics. They call the Roman Catholics idolaters and ridicule the doctrine of transubstantiation. (p. 865'). Impossible not to call them names. Good things among heretics are evil works. Condemns the wedding of friars and nuns, "whyche thinge is as all the worlde wotteth, beastlye and abominable in dede." (p. 866'). Of all the crimes heresy is the worst; it is worse than treason.

CAP. X. Expresses his sorrow that he could not be a priest himself. "My selfe am perde a temporall manne and by twyse weddyng am come in the case that I canne never be prieste." Important particulars about his property — not true that he should have amassed wealth during his Lord Chancellorship. "Of all the lands and fees I have in all Englande, besyde suche landes and fees as I have of the gyfte

of the Kynges moste noble grace, is not at this daye, the summe of full fyfthe pounce." (p. 867<sup>1</sup>). Roman Catholics have often tried to reward him for his "laboure agaynste these heretikes." "But I dare take God and theym also to recorde..... I would rather have caste theyr money into the Temys <sup>1</sup>) then take it."

Honour is to be given to the sacrament of order "with whiche the clergie is specially consecrate and dedicate unto God." (p. 867<sup>u</sup>). In one respect a man ought to be partial: when he has to choose "betwene truthe and falsehod, the catholik church and heretikes, between God and the divel." (p. 867<sup>u</sup>). — About the priests. More states emphatically that he never said they were faultless, nor would he ever excuse their faults. Follows an enumeration of these vices, with which compare analogous passages in the *Utopia*. (Bk. I). How he punished the bad priests "that were verye starke noughte." About the two "moste eminent orders that God hathe here ordayned on earthe: the sacred prynces and priestes." (p. 868<sup>u</sup>).

In which More expresses a wish that "every manne specialye CAP. XI. laboure to amende hymselfe, and rather accustome hymselfe to looke uppon hys owne fautes then uppon other menne." (p. 870 ). We must also be on our guard against people that are "noyous unto the common weale, as theves, murderers and heretikes." (p. 870<sup>1</sup>).

About the reverence due to the clergy, or as More expresses it CAP. XII. "on temperaunce and good mynde towards the spiritualtye." More admits that some priests are guilty of "theft, robbery, sacrilege, and murder, whereof in sundrye shyres of the realme there are at everye sessions openly founden some." (p. 871<sup>1</sup> and p. 871<sup>u</sup>). About the relation between the clergy and the laity. The spirituality have also reason to blame the temporality <sup>2</sup>) "as that they (the

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1) Thames.

2) Laity.

laity) be to blame, because they use the priestes overfamilyarlye." (p. 871).

CAP. XIII. About the Pacifier. More criticises the way in which the Pacifier tries to bring about a better understanding between the clergy and the laity. His method is rather humorously illustrated in a quarrel between husband and wife. (p. 873'). A peacemaker that wants to bring husband and wife "at one" should not rehearse their faults openly, but secretly, and applying this advice to ecclesiastical matters, More continues "so did John Gerson himself when he wrote in latyne and not in the vulger tongue" (p. 873") to mend the ways of the clergy, for John Gerson "woulde not that a man shoulde reproche and rebuke the prelates before the people."

CAP. XIV. General complaint — instead of charity, meakness, concord, and peace there reign envy, pride, and division. (pp. 874 and 875).

CAP. XV. About the shortcomings of some priests — about their pride — some "have risen into suche a ghostelye pride that thei have in maner disdained and dispised other." (p. 875').

CAP. XVI. Difference of opinion about the authority, power and jurisdiction of spiritual men "among themselves." (p. 876)".

CAP. XVII. There is a great "division" between spiritual and temporal men, says Pacifier. A man "so curiouse as to seke for fautes, may soone finde enough"... and "if he searche well, finde some in hymselfe to." (p. 877'). Ironically More continues, "But this good pacifyer has so great pity that to remedy the matter he has put it out abroad in print." (p. 877').

CAP. XVIII. Enumeration of the charges against priests. I. "That they to the honour of Godde do not set a good example to the people." More admits that this may be so, but he adds, "I think every manes duety toward God is so great that very fewe folke serve hym as they



shoulde doe." (p. 877') II. Some "procure ther owne honour, & call it the honour of God, and rather coveit to have rule over the people then to profite the people," and "that they covet their bodily ease and wordly welth in meate and drynke." More remarks that this has always been so, also in Christ's days and refers to Judas. — Unfair to condemn the whole body of the clergy. (p. 877"). III. Some serve God for wordly laud and "to be magnified therefore." "Those," says More, "are most folishe apes." Over against these bad servants of God, More places the great number of virtuous, holy priests. The wicked work of blasphemous heretics who spread the lie "that religious people doe fast and paye but for laude." (p. 878'). Besides in the small number of Christ's apostles there was one "nought", how could it be supposed then that none should be "nought" among the clergy? (p. 878").

About the respect and regard for priests ("the maintenance of the worldely honour of the church and of spyrytuall men." (p. 879). CAP. XIX

Other vices of the clergy — their greediness — they say that the ecclesiastics induce the people to "suche thinges as that bring riches to the Church as pilgrimages, pardos (pardons), chanteries, obites, and trentalles then to the payment of their dettes." (p. 879"). Follows a confutation of each point (pp. 879 and 880). CAP. XX.

About the riches of the Church. Some say the great "haboudance in the Church doth great hurt." (p. 880"). According to some it is not lawful that the Church should have any possessions. About Simon Fish and his *Supplicacio of Beggars*.<sup>1)</sup> (p. 881'). CAP. XXI

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1) Simon Fish was a member of the University of Oxford and a law student in London. Having publicly ridiculed Wolsey, he fled to the Low Countries and became intimate with some of the English exiles and imbibed their heresy. It was there he composed in 1528 his *Supplicacio of Beggars*.

CAP.  
XXII.

It were good (some say) to take away from the clergy "all that is to much", and leave that is sufficient, because great abundance "strangleth the love of God." (p. 881<sup>n</sup>). Follows lengthy confutation. Indignantly More asks, "By what right may any man take away land or property from another?"<sup>1</sup>).

CAP.  
XXIII.

Rehearsal of grievances — how the Church enriches itself: praying for souls in purgatory, granting of pardons, pilgrimages, &c. (p. 885<sup>n</sup>). Pacifier distinguishes three classes of people: I. Those that would take all from the Church and leave nothing. "And those men he sayth have a good zeale." II. Those that would take away that is too much and leave that is sufficient. "And those men have, he sayeth good discession." III. Those that will not allow the Church to have any property at all and do not forbear speaking evil things. "Those he denieth not to be wyse men and use a good policy." (p. 885<sup>n</sup>). — About the duties of Roman Catholics. Every good man "that hereth them (heretics) is bounden to denounce or accuse them, and the bishopes are bounden upon their wordes proved to putte them to penance, and reforme theym, which if they refuse or fall in relapse, the bishoppe is bounde to deliver them and all good temporall gouvernours are then bounden to punish them." (p. 886<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXIV.

About John Frith and his work against the doctrine of purgatory. More adds "is in prison in the towre alreadye taken by the bishoppes servauntes by the ayde of the kinges officers, at commandement of hys grace and hys counsayle, and so by the Kinges officers brought in the tower where he remaineth yet." (p. 887<sup>n</sup>). In prison Frith wrote "agaynst the catholique fayth of Chryst concerning the blessed sacrament of the aulter." (p. 888<sup>i</sup>).

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1) More's indignation affords another proof that his Utopian division of property was only meant as a farce

Rehearsal of former complaints — matrimony of priests “that lyve in sacrilege and incestuous lechery, as frere Luther dothe.” (p. 889<sup>u</sup>). Enumeration of several persons (such as Sir Thomas Hytton, Sir Thomas Bilney, Bayman, Bayfield the monke, and Tewkesbury, the pouchmaker) that had been delivered up to the judge. (p. 890<sup>i</sup>). More’s sentiments. If he were called before the King’s grace and his counsel, he would maintain “that any one of all these had wronge, but if it were for that they were burned no sooner.” (p. 890<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXV.

Blames the clergy for not appeasing the laity — they ought to bring the people to perfect love and obedience to their superiors. (p. 890).

CAP.  
XXVI.

The spiritual rulers pretend, Pacifier says, that their authority is so high and so immediately derived from God that the people are bound to obey them. (p. 891<sup>u</sup>) — Priests think they are perfect. Lengthy discourse and confutation of each point. (p. 893<sup>i</sup>). More indignantly asks, “Who hearde ever the Prelates of this realme pretende this that they should be obeyed in all thinges wer the thyngs bad or good?” (p. 893<sup>u</sup>). About transubstantiation. “What about those heretics that preach that in the blessed sacrament of the aulter were not the very bodye and very bloude of Christe, but as Fryth teacheth nothinge but wyne and breade?” (p. 893<sup>u</sup>).

CAP.  
XXVII.

Short chapter — Praise of the clergy, liberal in giving alms. (p. 894<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXVIII.

About the laity. Pacifier enumerates their faults : do not observe fast, do not give alms, &c. — Refutation (p. 894).

CAP.  
XXIX.

Treatment of beggars. When you give a beggar alms, let him work for it, “lest he should by your almes live idle and be a loiterer.”<sup>1)</sup> (p. 895<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXX.

1) Compare *Utopia* : More’s hatred of idleness.



CAP.  
XXXI. About fasting. The clergy should keep a longer lent than they now do. (p. 895<sup>u</sup>). About "the olde maner of fasting." Why evensong in lent is sung before noon. (p. 895<sup>n</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXII. Pacifier wants priests to wear "shirtes of hear." Upon which More proposes that all the priests shall make their prayers in the open streets and wear their shirts of hair "openly." (p. 896<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXIII. In which More declares that he cannot share the opinion of Pacifier that the whole body of the "spiritualite of thys realme" must be held in contempt. "I neither se cause why it should so, nor yet beleve that it is so, nor think it either good or honorable for this realme that other realmes shuld wene it were so." (p. 897<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXIV. Pacifier surmises that the "spiritualtye dothe most commonly nothing elles, but maliciouslye misseconstrue the mindes." More compares Pacifier with a man, who, when he sees his neighbour's house on fire will gladly and willingly lay on fagots and gunpowder to put it out. (p. 898<sup>i</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXV. Punishment of evil priests and apostates, among others Bayfield, who was "well and woorthelye burned in Smithfielde." (p. 899<sup>i</sup>). About the number of heretics punished. In the dioceses of England and Wales, with the exception of London, "scarcely 4 persons in five years." (p. 900<sup>i</sup>). In London more, also on account of "strangers" (p. 900<sup>n</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXVI. In which More swears he has never harmed heretics. "And of al that ever came in my hand for heresy, as helpe me God, saving as I said the sure keeping of them, and yet not so sure neither, but that George Cōstātine could stele awaye, els had never any of them any stripe or stroke give thē, so mucche as a fylpype on the forehead." (p. 901<sup>n</sup>).

CAP.  
XXXVII. Many fictitious tales about cruelty done to heretics. Remarks

about Frith. More fears that Christ will kindle a fire of fagots for him and "make hym therin sweate the bloude out of his bodye here and straight from hence send hys soule for ever into the fyre of hell" (p. 903<sup>n</sup>), but quickly adds, "Now in these wordes I neyther mēt nor meane that I would it wer so," for More swears that he would gladly suffer bodily pain, if he could "winne that yonge man to Christ and hys true faythe agayne." (p. 903<sup>n</sup>). Frith wrote a false foolish treatise against the blessed sacrament of the altar. <sup>1)</sup> (p. 903).

More argues with Thomas Philips, a heretic, does not treat him harshly, but commits him to the Tower. (p. 905). CAP.  
XXXVIII.

In which all the faults and shortcomings of the heretics are enumerated. (p. 906). CAP.  
XXXIX.

Further remarks on the crimes of heretics. (p. 907) Again More urgently entreats people that suspect their fellowmen of heresy to inform the judges. (p. 908<sup>i</sup>). Secret information against heretics in some cases necessary. Few heretics accused. "I wene in some seven yere not one; not fyve in fyftene yere." (p. 909<sup>n</sup>). CAP.  
XLI.

Heresy is as great a crime as treason. (p. 910<sup>i</sup>). CAP.  
XLI.

More does not understand why the names of their accusers should not be disclosed to the heretics. He protests against this method. "Surely, this is a sore law that a man shalbe condemned and not know the names of them that be causers therof." (p. 911<sup>i</sup>). These measures are injudicious and unjust and will cause hatred and malice. Other method suggested. More advises witnesses fearing the revenge of the heretics to call "for assistance of the temporall power." (p. 911<sup>i</sup>). Why stringent measures must be taken against the heretics. "Otherwise we should witness the same subversion of faith in this realm as in Switzerland and Saxony." (pp. 911 and 912). CAP.  
XLII.

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<sup>1)</sup> More refers to Frith's treatise against the Catholic doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.

CAP.  
XLIIL.

Pacifier remarks that many persons have been punished by the clergy "on mere suspicion." (p. 913<sup>1</sup>).

CAP.  
XLIV.

Laws of the Church must be observed by the clergy. More does not understand what Pacifier means by confederacies ; if he means by it assemblies of the clergy, he gives "a good thing and an wholesome, an odious heynous name." (p. 914<sup>"</sup>).

CAP.  
XLV.

According to Pacifier not all heretics should be treated alike. The clergy might punish out of sheer ignorance. (p. 915<sup>1</sup>) Many men err "of simplicity and ignorance." Cases of ignorance should, according to Pacifier, be excused. (p. 915<sup>1</sup>). — Refutation. — Pacifier's remarks will only serve to make people believe in the cruelty of their spiritual judges. If the priests were cruel, the number of heretics condemned would be much greater. The report of "their mishandling of men and of uncharitable dealing is a verye false fayned tale." (p. 916<sup>1</sup>) Punishment is ordained to "refrain the passion, for passion may lead to manslaughter and to heresy." (p. 916<sup>"</sup>) More then bitterly remarks, "Will this pacifyer that all these blasphemous damnable heretikes shalbe spared, for suche desperate damnable passions ?" (p. 916<sup>"</sup>). If these heretics should be pardoned, when they speak "of ignorance, or of oversight or of simplicitie or of passion," they would "alway passe unpunished." (p. 917<sup>1</sup>)

CAP.  
XLVI.

Further remarks about the methods proposed for the persecutions of heretics. If Pacifier's advice is followed, More fears that "wilfull offendours will go without correccion." (p. 918<sup>1</sup>)

CAP.  
XLVII.

Evil May day — a conspiracy of two young lads only. (p. 920<sup>1</sup>) Falsehood of heretics who maintain that "more then half of everye shyre is of their own sect." The same boast made by Bayfield, the apostate, but when he was burned in Smithfield, "there were none of his brethren to help him," More ironically adds (p. 920<sup>"</sup>). Neither the devil nor heretic shall prevail against the Church. (p. 922<sup>1</sup>)



Sloth and negligence of the Catholic party. Addresses the Catholics who should have been roused to activity long before, "to have repressed those heretiques in time, before they grew to so many." (p. 922")

What the mild measures of Pacifier would lead to. Heretics must be severely punished, for they are a danger, a pest to the State. "Those, whose corrupte canker no cure can heale, must be cut of in season for corrupting farther." (p. 925").

CAP.  
XLVIII.

More against changing the good laws before made against heretics, otherwise the real faith would decay, and "more harme grow theron then any manne yet can tell." (p. 925") The whole sum and effect of his mind is that he bears a tender mind of truth towards the spirituality.

CAP. LIX.

Follows the memorable passage, "As touching heretikes, I hate that vice of theirs and not their persons, and very faine would I that the tone were destroyed, and the tother saved." (p. 925") More again exhorts the people to remain good Catholics.

Conclusion, in which More refers once more to Frith and Tyndale. Hopes he has proved the infallible doctrine of the Church.

CAP. L.

### APPENDIX III.

#### PLAYS DEALING WITH SIR THOMAS MORE.

It is not surprising that the pre-eminent position of Sir Thomas More, and especially the tragical circumstances that led to his untimely death, should have afforded ample material for dramatists to work upon. Yet the number of plays is smaller than would be expected. I have only found six, which are given here in chronological order.

I. *Sir Thomas More, A Play* (British Museum No. 7368). It was edited by the Rev. Alexander Dyce for the Shakespeare Society in 1844 and by Dr. W. W. Greg for the Malone Society, 1911.

II. *Thomas Morus ou Le Triomphe de la Foy, et de la Constance*; Tragédie en prose. Dédiée à Madame la Duchesse d'Esgvillon, par Monsieur de la Serre, Paris, 1642.

III. *Tomas Morus, Den grooten Kanselier van Engeland, Met 'et verstooten der Koningin Katrijne*. Treur-spel, door J. J. Schipper, Amsterdam, 1659.

IV. *Thomas Morus ofte Verwinninge van Geloof en Stant-vastigheydt*. Eerst in 't Frans buyten Rijm gemaect door den uyt-nemenden schrijver de heer Puget de Serres, Naederhandt in 't Neder-landts over-geset door de Heer W. V. S.<sup>1)</sup>. Ende nu in Rijngebraght door Henrick Bruno, Conrector tot Hoorn. Hoorn, 1660.

V. *Thomas Morus Of de Zegepraal Des Geloofs En der Stant-*

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1) Willem Van Sander.

*vastigheid*, Treurspel door de Heer de la Serre, Historieschrijver van Frankrijk, in de Fransche Taal beschreven. Nieuwelijks van J. H. Glazemaker vertaalt, Amsterdam, 1668.

VI. *The Tragedy of Sir Thomas More* by James Hurdis (written in 1791, published in 1792 ?)

Nothing is known concerning the author of the first-mentioned tragedy. It was most probably composed towards the close of the sixteenth century, about 1590.<sup>1)</sup> The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* observes that the play is connected by some commentators with Shakespeare.<sup>2)</sup>

The French play enjoyed a tremendous success, at least if we are to believe Puget de la Serre on this point. "On scait que mon *Thomas Morus* s'est acquis une réputation que toutes les autres comédies du tems n'avoient jamais eue. M. le Cardinal de Richelieu a pleuré dans toutes les représentations qu'il a vues de cette Pièce..... Le Palais Royal étoit trop petit, pour contenir ceux que la curiosité attiroit à cette Tragédie. On y suoit au mois de Décembre et l'on tua quatre Portiers, de compte fait, la première fois qu'elle fut jouée. Voilà ce qu'on appelle de bonnes Pièces. M. Corneille n'a point de preuves si puissantes de l'excellence des siennes et je lui céderai volontiers le pas, quand il aura fait tuer cinq portiers en un seul jour."<sup>3)</sup>

Schipper's *Tomas Morus* was dedicated to the grand-daughter of Jacob Cats, Elizabeth van Aerssen („Aen d' E. Joffer E. V. W."), who seems to have provided the dramatist with some data for his play<sup>4)</sup>, the concluding lines of the dedication pointing to this:

1) See Preface Shakespeare Society Publications, No. 23.

2) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. See More.

3) *Dictionnaire Dramatique*. (Tome III. p. 271).

4) See Dr. J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van het Drama en van het Tooneel in Nederland*, Wolters, 1904. Vol. I. p. 325. Worp calls the writer erroneously Schippers; this must be Schipper.



En ziet ook, zoo 't U niet verveeld,  
 Hoe Morus nu zijn einde speeld,  
 Daer gij mij eertijts stof toe brochte,  
 Zo ik Uw Edelheyt verzochte;  
 Speur of ik daer op heb gelet:  
 Vaer wel dan, schoone Elizabeth.

The two translated Dutch plays of 1660 and 1668 seem not to deserve any special notice, for Worp gives no particulars and only mentions the titles.<sup>1)</sup>

James Hurdis (1763—1801), friend of Cowper, and professor of poetry at Oxford wrote *The Tragedy of Sir Thomas More* in 1791. This play has entirely fallen into oblivion. The *Dictionary of National Biography* calls Hurdis "a pale copy of Cowper" and his blank verse "flaccid and monotonous."

Robert Southey did not write a play on Sir Thomas More, but he published his *Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*. (London, 1829, 2 vols), a series of interviews between himself and the ghost of Sir Thomas More. The machinery excited the scathing ridicule of Macaulay. But the view of social evils to which Southey there gave expression often in anticipation of Mr. Ruskin, was in many respects deeper and truer than that of his optimistic critic.<sup>2)</sup>

Here is a large field for investigation. The list of plays must be considerably extended, and the original tragedies carefully studied. The play of 1590 seems to me of special interest, as it gives a nearly contemporary view of More. Who is its author? Is it possible that he purposely concealed his name on account of political or religious considerations? I have read the tragedies by Puget de la Serre and by Schipper, and it struck me that many dialogues in the

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1) See Dr. J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van het Drama en van het Tooneel in Nederland*, Wolters, 1904. Vol. II. p. 126.

2) *Dictionary of National Biography*. See Robert Southey.

Dutch play bear a striking resemblance to those in the French. In how far is the Dutch tragedy original, and in how far did it borrow from the French? These and many other questions demand our attention. I intend to discuss them in the near future.

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## APPENDIX IV.

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## STELLINGEN.

## I.

Michelet's verdict "Thomas Morus est un romancier fade, dont la faible Utopie a grand' peine à trouver ce que les mystiques communistes du moyen âge avaient réalisé d'une manière plus originale" is open to serious criticism. (J. Michelet, *Histoire de France*, Paris, Chamerot, 1855. Vol. VIII, p. 414).

## II.

Churton Collins is wrong, when he maintains that the general description of Utopia is plainly modelled on Plato's picture of Atlantis in the *Critias*. (J. Churton Collins in his edition of the *Utopia*, Clarendon Press, 1904, p. 184).

## III.

In an article, entitled *Inedited Documents relating to the Imprisonment and Condemnation of Sir Thomas More* (see *Archaeologia*, Vol. XXVII, pp. 361—374) John Bruce points out that the petition of December 1534 from the wife and children of Sir Thomas More to Henry VIII, was not drawn up by Lady More, but by Sir Thomas More himself. More's correspondence during the period of his imprisonment clearly proves that this statement cannot be correct.

## IV.

In his edition of *Jacke Jugeler*, W. H. Williams suggests that this interlude may have been written by the author of Ralph Roister Doister. There can be no doubt that this statement is correct. (See *Jacke Jugeler*, edited by W. H. Williams, Cambridge University Press, 1914).

## V.

In Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, Act III, Scene V, (Materialien zur Kunde des älteren Englischen Dramas, Band VII, p. 39 (1524,5).

'Fore God, not I, and I might have been  
ioyn'd patten with one of the seven wise  
masters, for knowing him

it is wrong to read *pat* for *patten*.

## VI.

It is to be regretted that the work of Inigo Jones as a stage-architect is not sufficiently appreciated in English literature.

## VII.

The Shakespeare-Bacon controversy cannot be settled satisfactorily, unless it is considered from a philological standpoint.

## VIII.

Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence is convinced that in *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene I,

"Heer 's a scull now hath lyen you i' th' earth 23 yeeres  
..... this same scull, sir, was, sir, Yorick's skull....."

Yorick stands for the dramatist John Heywood. This is impossible. (Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, *Bacon is Shakespeare*, London, 1910, p. 67).



## IX.

Tennyson reflects too much the passing features and is too much entangled in the prejudices of his time to stand much chance of being ultimately reckoned among the foremost poets of English literature.

## X.

De studie van het Shakespeariaansch tooneel heeft nog niet tot een bevredigend resultaat geleid ; het is dus zaak de onderzoekingen, waarbij het werk van Victor E. Albright *The Shaksperian stage* dient geraadpleegd te worden, voort te zetten.

## XI.

Het onderwijs in de literatuur op de Gymnasia en de H. B. Scholen mag niet ontaarden in het geven van een gewone vertaalles, maar moet in de allereerste plaats ten doel hebben den literairen smaak van de leerlingen te ontwikkelen.

## XII.

Voor leeraren is een academische opleiding gewenscht, doch tevens moet aandacht worden geschonken aan de practische vorming van den aanstaanden docent.

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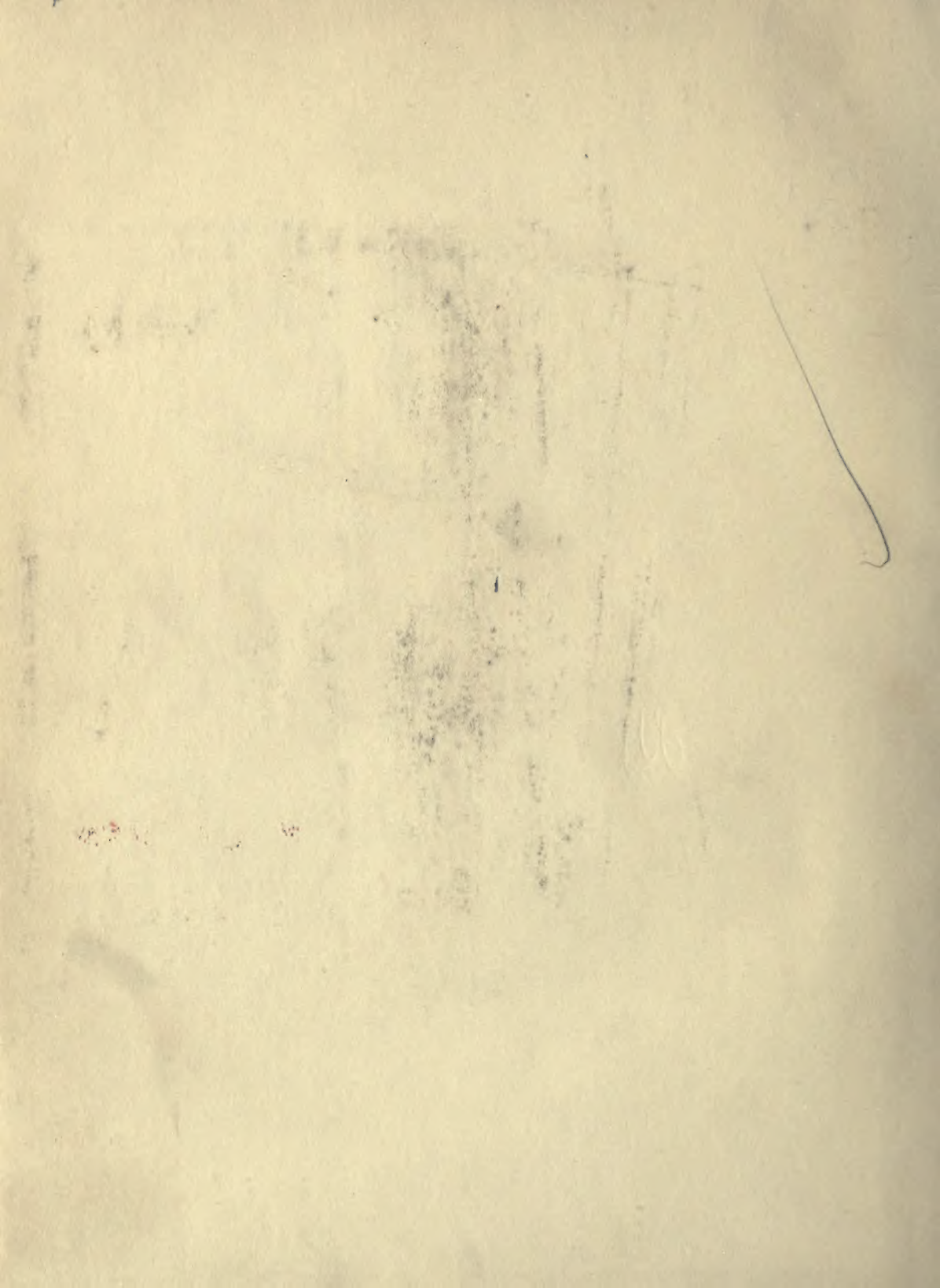


- A comparison of ~~human~~  
the Utopias specified  
in Plato's Republic  
and More's Utopia











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